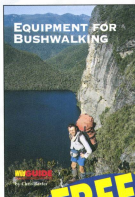


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We've been making Europe's top-selling, synthetic sleeping bags for over 20 years. We sell more bags than the entire sales of all sleeping bags in Australia. So there must be something we're doing that's right.

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8. Other quality features.

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Beware of cheaper imitations made from non-breathable fabrics!

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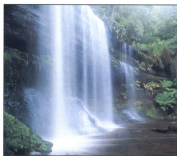


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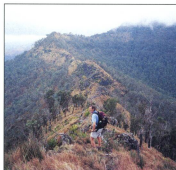
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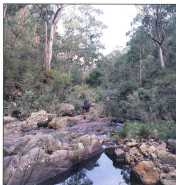
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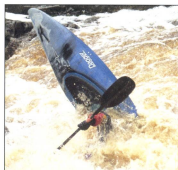
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The activities covered in
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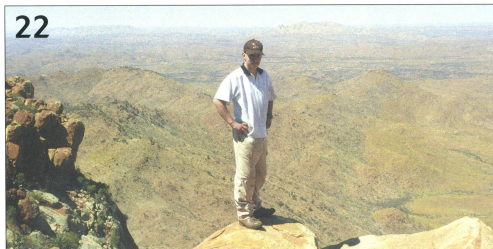


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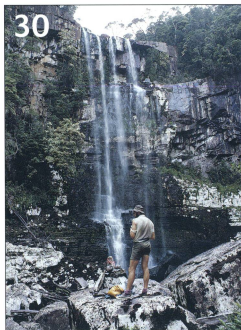
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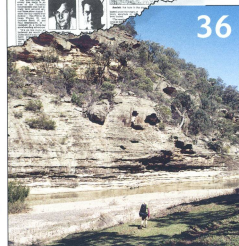
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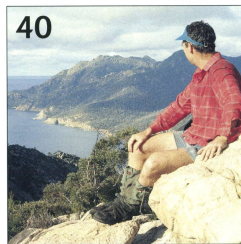
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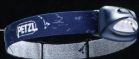


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The Zipka is the little sister of the Tikka. A roll-up strap system replaces the elasticated headband, making it even more compact and lightweight than the Tikka. The Zipka can be carried on the head, the wrist or the ankle. 64 gm (including batteries)!



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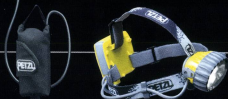
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Surveying the surveys

What do you think?

THE LONG-STANDING WILD GEAR SURVEYS, published in all 87 issues, are popular with many readers—with many, but not with all. Some readers believe that *Wild* surveys must somehow be influenced by the insidious power of advertising, no matter what we have done to allay such concerns. At the other extreme are readers irritated because *Wild* surveys don't tell them what they should buy. Then there are the manufacturers, distributors and retailers whose products are surveyed; all of whom are actual or potential *Wild* advertisers. Of course, many understand the importance of editorial independence and integrity in attracting, and holding, readers—their market—but some consider that *Wild* surveys should be 'a service to the industry'. Only a minority hold this view; however, others have expressed concerns. The 'bullet' ratings awarded to various aspects of the products surveyed are the most contentious subject. We have been criticised about their fairness, accuracy and reliability and, consequently, are subjected to pressure to discontinue them. (We did this for a while some years ago but because of strong reader outrage we were obliged to reinstate them!) Some industry figures have complained about factual accuracy in surveys. (The extent of this matter can be gauged from the 'Corrections and amplifications' box in *Wild* Info as we publish all corrections notified to us. We should point out that manufacturers' specifications are sent to them for verification before we publish them.) Dissatisfaction is also expressed by those businesses in the outdoors industry whose products are not included in surveys—because they have not been sufficiently widely available. These businesses are frustrated because they haven't the distribution necessary for inclusion, but see *Wild* surveys as an important means to achieving enough reader interest in their products to encourage retailers to stock them. Catch 22. (We have excluded such products partly to keep surveys to a manageable size and partly in response to reader complaints when we survey products that they have difficulty obtaining.) Other businesses have expressed irritation at not being included because they were overlooked, apparently due to their products not being sufficiently widely available to be noticed by surveyors or referees in outdoors shops and our failure to detect the omission. One solution would be for all businesses wishing to have their products considered for inclusion in surveys to advise *Wild* editorial staff of this.

A suggestion we frequently receive is that survey findings—particularly the bullet rat-

ings—be based on the results of 'scientific' testing and that surveys be conducted by teams of reviewers and referees. This sounds reasonable until you consider the practical realities. First, all 'objective' testing entails subjective choices in determining what will be tested; how; and by whom. Secondly, 'objective' tests don't give the full picture of how a product will perform in 'the real world' now, let alone in, say, one or five years' time: the fabric in a rain jacket can be tested for waterproofness but the effectiveness of a jacket in keeping the wearer dry also depends on the product's design, its construction, and the conditions under which it is used, such as underneath a heavy rucksack or in thick scrub. Then there are questions about how well laboratory tests for, say, abrasion resistance indicate wear in the bush due to puncturing, snagging, tearing and stress on seams. Thirdly comes the question of cost. 'Scientific' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and to the best of our knowledge no such testing is regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. Finally, the time needed for laboratory testing of all products to be surveyed is beyond what would be available to enable us to publish one survey (let alone two) every season as *Wild* has done for some years.

Given the above limitations and difficulties we have concluded that, despite inevitable imperfections, the form of survey we have adopted—conducted by suitably experienced, informed and independent people—strikes the best balance between 'science' and 'the real world' and is of most value. (See 'Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not' on page 63.)

While they have been part of the magazine since its foundation 22 years ago, like everything else in *Wild*, Gear Surveys have been subject to constant review and have evolved accordingly. Among significant changes were the introduction of referees and of the 'Buy right' box some years ago. At present Gear Surveys are undergoing their most thorough review ever. You will notice some changes in this issue: the (re)introduction of an explanation in each survey of what surveys are and are not (mentioned above); we include each manufacturer's Web address so readers can also check manufacturer specifications themselves and obtain more comprehensive and detailed information 'straight from the horse's mouth'; and

surveyors explain in more detail the basis on which their subjective ratings are determined.

Further—and possibly more far-reaching—changes are planned. There is, for example, the vexed question of what brands should be included in surveys. Only those that are 'widely available' or (keeping in mind space limitations) should we cast a wider net (and possibly include an 'availability' column in survey tables)? In recent issues we have sought to compromise by mentioning 'other brands' (with contact details)—some of them extremely good—in the text accompanying survey tables.

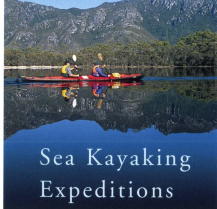
This Editorial is a key part of the review process. Its purpose is to air the questions and to invite input from all interested parties—readers, manufacturers, advertisers and surveyors. What do you think of *Wild* Gear Surveys? What are your views on the key point of editorial independence and survey integrity? What changes, if any, would you like to see?

The Wild Environmentalist of the Year Award

It is always a pleasure and a privilege to be able to give credit to those who have made it their life work tirelessly and fearlessly to fight for the preservation of wilderness. This is particularly the case when we can announce the winner of the prestigious \$1000 *Wild* Environmentalist of the Year Award. If that person is a long-standing contributor to environmental education through the pages of *Wild* itself, and a *Wild* Special Adviser, that pleasure and privilege is greatest of all. Past winners have included such environmental luminaries as Jill Redwood, Doug Humann, Bob Burton, Alec Marr and Virginia Young. This year's winner, Geoff Law, meets the above criteria and his name sits well among those mentioned. Well known to *Wild* readers for his informed Green Pages reports over many years, Geoff has also contributed more substantial articles, not only on environmental issues, but also about his own imaginative wilderness experiences both in Australia and further afield. Geoff is known for his outstanding work in protecting Tasmania's wild places that are of such importance to *Wild* readers and is a key member of Greens Senator Bob Brown's staff. In announcing this award we offer Geoff our warmest congratulations and thanks for a job well done. 🌞

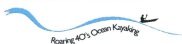
Chris Baxter

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Buck passing and bull

The *real* hazards of our high country

JUST THOUGHT I MIGHT SEND YOU SOME info...to warn people about having their vehicles damaged in the Alpine National Park. Last March my car was parked in the car park at Pretty Valley (near Falls Creek, Victoria).

While there I observed Hereford cattle moving around the car park—and my car. On closer inspection I found that the cattle had been rubbing their horns against car mirrors, denting panels. The cost to repair the damage was \$1500 and I had to pay \$450 excess. I contacted Parks Victoria in Bright who then put me on to the grazier who holds the lease, a Mr Max Blair. He did not own the cattle although they were on his licensed area.

I then wrote to the Minister for the Environment, Sherryl Garbutt, who referred me back to Parks Victoria, Bright. They in turn referred the matter to their insurer who wrote back to me to say that, while they sympathise, it would set a precedent if they made a gratuitous payment to me.

The car park is very popular with bushwalkers and I think people should be made aware of the possibility of their vehicles being damaged. Apparently I am the first person to make a complaint. I suspect that this is because I witnessed the cattle damaging my vehicle. Most people would not notice the damage until later and by then not realise how it had happened.

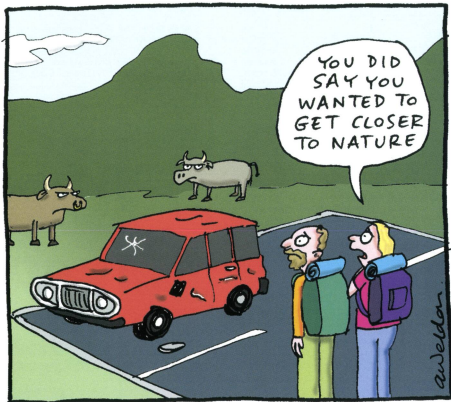
I will continue to pursue this matter through the government and try to inform as many people as possible of the risk of vehicle damage by cattle in the Alpine National Park (another reason cattle should not be there).

lan Harwood
(by email)

the ongoing forest 'campaigns' (supported by *Wild*) that promote resource insecurity and discourage value-adding investment.

For Victorians, the real choice is either to accept the Regional Forest Agreement compromise which conserves more than 85 per cent of our forests while permitting sustainable hardwood timber production from the

Today, most of Australia's native forest cut is wood-chipped for export. The figures are startling—95 per cent of the logs cut in the Eden region of New South Wales is export wood-chipped, 90 per cent in Tasmania, 80–90 per cent in Victoria's East Gippsland and 90 per cent in the Otways. History repeats itself. Through planting



What about wood-chipping?

Judy Clark's assertion that Australia can choose not to log its native forests (*Wild* no 86) is based on the premise that plantation softwood timber is a preferred substitute for native forest hardwood in all applications.

However, hardwood is stronger and more durable and attractive and so is likely to continue to be preferred for uses such as feature flooring, stair treads, kitchen cupboards and benches, high-quality furniture, high-strength beams, window joinery, outdoor applications and certain packaging applications where strength is important.

The closure of our native forest timber industry would result in increased imports of tropical hardwoods, which are already being used for many of these applications.

Judy's claim that Victoria's hardwood industry has failed to move into these markets is both debatable and ironic in view of

remaining areas (Department of Natural Resources & Environment statistics); or to live and work in situations dominated by plantation pine and imported hardwoods.

Mark Poynter
Alphington, Vic

Australia's plantations are the foresters' legacy. In the 1960s they lobbied governments to plant enough softwood trees to meet half Australia's expected sawn timber requirements in 2000, leaving the other half for native-forest sawmills. As it turned out—35 years later—the foresters grossly overestimated Australia's sawn timber needs. Our sawn timber consumption could be fully met from softwood plantations alone. Native-forest sawn timber is losing in the inevitable market battle unwittingly set up by the foresters. Plantation products compete against virtually all native-forest sawn timber uses, even against many of the relatively minor products (in wood volume terms) listed by Poynter.

eucalypts, we now have a major competitor to native-forest export wood-chipping.

Australia is in the enviable position of having a sufficiently large softwood and hardwood plantation estate that can not only meet virtually all our domestic timber needs but also completely substitute for native-forest wood-chipping. How do you want your timber needs met and what future do you want for native forests? Let's have the debate the RFA process never allowed.

Judy Clark
Postdoctoral Fellow
Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT

Photographic fraud

I am enjoying reading your magazine and look forward to renewing my subscription when the time comes. Congratulations on



Lexan® Wine Glass & Flute

GSI Lexan® Wine Glasses & Flutes are the perfect addition for your next camping trip or picnic. The patent-pending design unscrews at the midpoint of the stem, so the base can be compactly snapped into the bowl for packing and storage. Super lightweight and nearly indestructible, yet elegantly shaped.

Bugaboo™ Teflon®/Aluminium Cook-sets



Aluminium Bugaboo™ cook-sets are light and the Teflon interior coating makes cleaning a breeze! The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans.

DiamondBack Gripper™ and mesh storage-bag included.

Glacier Stainless Steel™ Cook-sets

Glacier Stainless Steel™ cook-sets are finely crafted culinary pieces for the practising gourmet and are crafted from 18/8 stainless steel. The mirror-bright finish looks great! All pieces have rounded corners for easy cleaning and serving. The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans. DiamondBack gripper and mesh storage-bag included. The five- and seven-piece sets include a bonus nylon mini-spatula.



Espresso...

Treat yourself to an absolutely delicious espresso with these compact little appliances! They are crafted from rugged yet lightweight aluminium. Simply fill the basket with well-ground coffee, add water to valve level and screw the unit shut. Place it on your stove at low heat and within minutes, the steam pipe delivers a flavourful cup of European-style brew. Available in one- and four-cup sizes: red, blue, green or polished.



Or if you prefer to brew great coffee regardless of where you are, try the new Lexan® JavaPress™! Perfect for camping, backpacking, boats, caravans and car camping, just add boiling water to coffee grounds, let stand for a minute or two and you will have a perfect cup of fresh coffee. The GSI JavaPress is dishwasher safe and can also be used for preparing tea! Available in two sizes: 280 ml and 925 ml.

Lexan®: Lightweight, but Tough!

LEXAN® is the toughest thermo-plastic available... with high impact strength, dimensional stability and temperature performance from -55°C to +130°C. It's dishwasher- and microwave safe and incredibly lightweight. You can make a complete, convenient setting from our range of two bowls, large plate and knife, fork, spoon and teaspoon. And they won't burn your fingers! Colours: cutlery - Eggshell or Emerald (above); plates and bowls - Smoke or Emerald. Cutlery is available in bulk, or in three- or four-piece sets.



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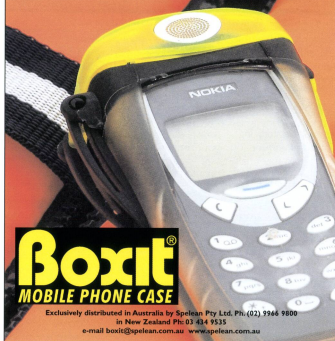


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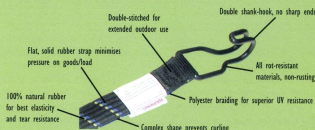
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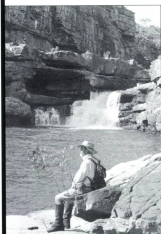
The waterfalls for which the Top End is famous look like they do in the tourist brochures. In a few months they will have begun to disappear. Many 4WD tracks remain closed so you can enjoy places like Jim Jim Falls without the day tourists who arrive in June. Places which become too dry to visit later in the year are still accessible.

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the landscape photos in the issues I have seen (the last five). They appear to reflect reality...I haven't noticed much use of the telescopic photo in your publication, which is good. Perhaps the only exception is page 29 of *Wild* no 86 where there is a somewhat telescoped photo of the Snowy Mountains from the Cobberas No 2. The foreground, to a varying extent, looks 'squashed' in these photos.

Telescopic pictures have good uses, like zooming in on something inaccessible, but to create the image of mountains towering over something is fraudulent...and disappointing when you actually arrive at the place. No one ever discusses this as photographic fraud; photos are never labelled as telescopic. I have seen ridiculous postcards such as Seattle looking as though it would be hit by an avalanche from Mt Ranier! It's a puzzle to me why this visual fraud is allowed in publications. I'm sure [that] with the right camera and setting myself up on a high place at Watsons Bay I could make the Blue Mountains look as though they are towering over the Sydney CBD. Keep up the good work and keep an eye out for those 'fake' photos from contributors.

Dennis O'Hara
(by email)

Coppery tales

Ever since reading in *Wild* no 78 of a 61-year-old obstetrician's ascent of Federation Peak, I have decided to plan for my own journey to stand at least in the vicinity of the peak on Australia Day 2004...I so thoroughly enjoyed Rosie Johnson's article [*Actually, it was written by her father, Doug!* Managing Editor] about the experience with her sister, her mountain-goat dad, Doug, and herself that I'd like to throw in a subscription to *Wild* to anyone who would like to come along for the trip in January 2004...My husband is an old Kenyan copper with lots of coppery tales published but lots more to tell, so whoever takes up this challenge will not be without some amusement and definitely not bored...

Angela Wild
Bunbury, WA

Our mate Buntly

Congratulations on the Order of Australia. I believe it was long overdue. I'm honoured to be part of what has become a respected historical record of recreation and achievement in the outdoors, conservation issues and even the technological history contained in advertisements and reviews...not to mention the quality writing and photography which support it. Well done!

Stephen Bunton
(by email)

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahara, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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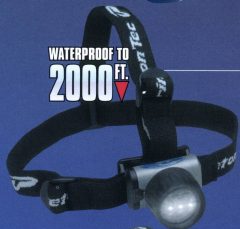
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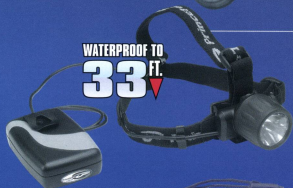
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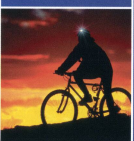
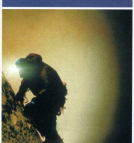
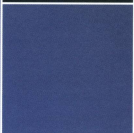
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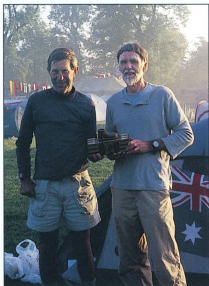
Czech mate

Australia has retained its unbeaten record in the fifth world rogaining championships at Lesna in the west of the Czech Republic. Defending champions Australian David Rowlands and New Zealander Greg Barbour scored 4140 points to defeat the Czech pair Petr Boravek and Miroslav Seidl (4040 points). The win takes Rowlands' impressive record to three world titles and nine Australian titles. Overall women's winners were Australians Kay Haarsma and Julie Quinn (2460 points).

The event was held in boggy forest and farmland on the German/Czech border. The weather was overcast, so the full moon provided little benefit. One compensation for competitors were the wild raspberries, strawberries and blueberries growing on the course. The course is historically interesting as it is on the edge of the former Iron Curtain and border control and sentry posts were at several points.

A sign of the growth of the sport since its inception in Australia in 1976 is that 182 teams competed from 21 countries. A contingent of 56 entrants travelled from Australia. The next world championships will be in Arizona, USA, in 2004. Organisers await an assessment of recent forest fires in the area to determine whether the event will have to be relocated.

John Gavens and Heather Leslie



Scenes from the World Rogaining Championships 2002. Top left, David Rowlands, left, and Greg Barbour, overall winners. Top right, Leigh Privett, left, and Rob Taylor, men's super veterans winners. Right, Privett 'the morning after'. All photos John Gavens and Heather Leslie



Australian Capital Territory brings home the bacon

A team from the ACT encountered wild pigs and rugged conditions on its way to a maiden win in the interstate section at the Australian Rogaining Championships in Namadgi National Park, ACT, on 27–28 April. During the Championships briefings competitors were warned to look out for wild pigs, pig shooters, pig dogs and wild dogs.

Overall winners were defending Australian champion Nigel Aylott and Victorian champion Kevin Humphrey (3260 points). Second and only ten points be-

hind were veterans Robert Vincent (Australian champion in 2000) and David Rowlands (current world champion and six times Australian champion). Third for the third year in a row were Richie Robinson (Queensland) and Mike Hotchkis (New South Wales), the Australian champion in 2000, with 3120 points.

The women's section was the battle of the sisters. Susanne Cassanova and Heather Smith won with 2530 points. Second were Susanne's sister Jenny Cassanova and Alex Tyson (2440 points) and third, the sister

team of Cora and Jenny Wolswinkel (2170 points).

For the third year running, the super-veteran trio from New Zealand—Bill Kennedy, Peter Squires and Anne Kennedy—won both the mixed veteran and super-veteran categories with 2260 points. Overall mixed winners were Tom Landon-Smith and Alina McMaster (2880 points). Second were Graham Turner and Pam James (2470 points) and third, Andrew and Nicole Haigh with 2420 points.

JG and HL

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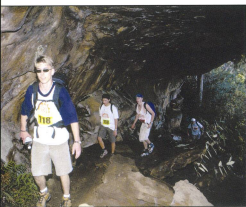
Photographic licence?

A contributor has reported to *Wild* that he was contacted by the Central Coast branch of the New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Service with regard to photo licensing. The NPWS finalised its Regulation 2002 in September and the document has been posted on its Web site (www.npws.nsw.gov.au). Apparently the NPWS is now enforcing section 20 of the Regulation which pertains to the right to publish photos depicting National Parks in NSW—those who do so as a 'commercial activity' will require a licence. It seems that bushwalkers who take photos and sell them occasionally are exempt from the definition of 'commercial activity'.

As we went to press in late October we learned of an even more Draconian and alarming development in some NSW and south-east Queensland National Parks, including the most popular: bushwalkers, including day walkers, were banned from entering the most popular parks until after the summer on account of the 'fire hazard' they pose to forests!

Trailwalker 2003

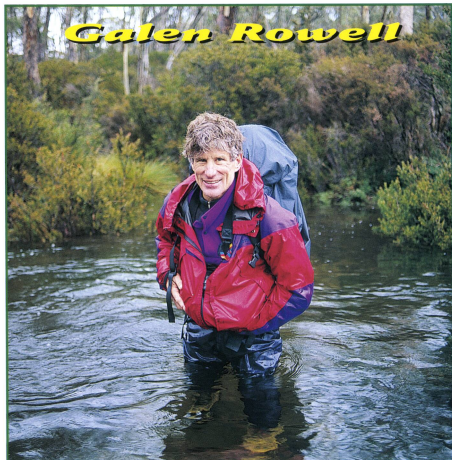
Oxfam Trailwalker is an endurance event in which teams of four attempt to walk a 100 kilometre cross-country route in 48 hours. It is a unique event that fosters teamwork



Competitors in the 2001 Oxfam Trailwalker, NSW. Oxfam

and personal endeavour. Trailwalker is not a relay event—team members complete the 100 kilometres together.

In Melbourne, Oxfam Trailwalker will be held annually at the beginning of April.



Galen Rowell, Pine Valley, Tasmania, in September 1996. Grant Dixon

American photographer and mountaineer Galen Rowell died in a light-plane crash near his home in California, USA, on 11 August. He was 62. Also killed were his wife Barbara and two friends.

Rowell was one of the world's pre-eminent wilderness photographers and received the Ansell Adams Award in 1984. He became a full-time photographer in 1972 and his first *National Geographic* cover story (on climbing at Yosemite) was published a year later. His photographs and writings have appeared in 18 books and countless magazine articles since then.

Rowell took part on some 40 expeditions, numerous climbs and undertook many photo assignments throughout the world. He was a master at what he termed participatory photography, where the photographer is not merely an observer but an active part of the image. He

applied this philosophy to his best landscape images, which feature a convergence of light and form he called 'dynamic landscapes'.

Australians nowadays are no strangers to the use of wilderness photography to support and promote environmental and other causes. Rowell had actively and successfully sought to use his photographs in this manner for many years. He also had a particular passion for the plight of Tibet and his images have contributed to the ongoing Tibetan human rights campaign. Rowell's extensive transparency collection will continue to be managed as a commercial library so, while the man will be sadly missed, for many years to come his images will no doubt continue to support and promote the causes in which he believed.

Grant Dixon

Melbourne Trailwalker 2003 will begin at the Ferry Creek Primary School. It passes north through the Dandenong Ranges National Park, east along the Warburton Trail, then north again over the top of Mt Donna Buang in the Yarra Ranges National Park. The route passes through Marysville State Forest and finishes in Gallipoli Park Recreation Reserve in Marysville.

Oxfam Trailwalker is a fund-raising activity organised by Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. Money raised supports Oxfam Com-

munity Aid Abroad's development and relief programmes among disadvantaged communities in 30 overseas countries and Indigenous Australia. For more information, phone (03) 9289 9444 or email trailwalker@melbourne.caa.org.au

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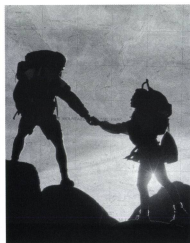
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about 850 kilometres across the Pyrenees, the mountain range that divides France and Spain. I climbed about 45 000 metres up and down in every sort of weather, raised nearly \$30 000 for charity and saw some of the most spectacular, unspoilt mountain scenery in Europe. My route took me along some of the famous French Grande Randonnée tracks as well as along lesser-known goat tracks and at times off the track. I wandered through remote villages, picked my way across magnificent waterfalls, stumbled through waist-deep snow and sweated up barren, boulder-strewn moonscapes below towering limestone cliffs.

I met relatively few people (I didn't meet any bears or Basque separatists) along the way. I almost tripped over a couple of sodden Irishmen hiding under bracken in a lightning storm, which was a rare treat. The locals were without exception generous and good natured—even after France was knocked out of the World Cup! I finished on Bastille Day (14 July) feeling self-content, motivated and inspired. ☺

Nick Palmer

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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Corrections and amplifications

The article 'The Tallest Trees' in *Wild* no 86 should have been attributed to Bernie Mace, not just Brian Walters.

The Gear Survey of bushwalking boots in *Wild* no 86 included two errors regarding the upper material of Garmont boots in its table: for the Flash Gore-Tex it is a combination of synthetic material and leather; for the Syncro it is leather.

The reference to the Picton valley in the Green Pages item 'Underground secrets' in *Wild* no 86 should have been to the Huon valley.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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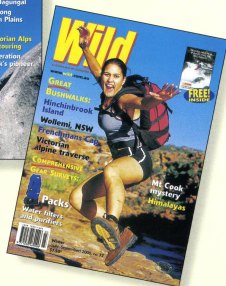
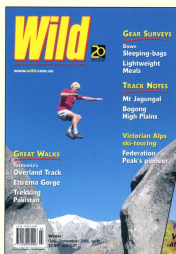
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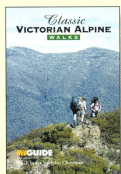
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A Lofty Challenge

Climbing the highest peak in each State and Territory of Australia;
article and photos by Nick and Ben Gough

IN 1999 WE SET OURSELVES THE CHALLENGE of climbing the highest peak in each State and Territory of Australia. These peaks present quite diverse challenges. For the five

peaks in the eastern States we had recourse to several authoritative guidebooks but for the three desert peaks, we were on our own.

Mt Zeil, Northern Territory

Mt Zeil is towards the western end of the Macdonnell Ranges in the Northern Territory. We had our first lucky break when Nick discussed our challenge over a beer with a botanist mate from the Northern Territory's Parks & Wildlife Commission, and asked about access.

'Not real easy', advised Greg. 'Although it's part of a recent extension to the Western Macs Park, it's not that easy to get to.' Mt Zeil is some 40 dry kilometres from the nearest park access point at Redbank Gorge to the south-east. Closer access points are through Glen Helen station to the west or Narwietooma to the north, but the owners aren't always happy to allow strangers into their property. 'You could arrange a helicopter drop, I guess...' Greg was warning to the problem '...or we may have a botanical expedition later in the year that you could join'.

In August an email arrived from Raelee, one of Greg's field botanists, saying that she and her offsideer Jenni would be in the Mt Zeil area in September: be there or be square. We arrived in Alice Springs to join

a PWCNT contingent comprising Raelee and Jenni, Greg and his wife Amanda, and the head ranger for the Western Macdonnell Ranges National Park, Mike Heywood, and his wife Gail.

We took a four-wheel-drive track in from the north through Narwietooma station and made camp four to five kilometres from the base of Mt Zeil. Early the next morning we walked to the base of the mountain and followed a steep gorge on the north face south towards the summit, some 900 metres above. This gorge comprises successions of large boulders over which we clambered, and then climbed steep rock slabs.

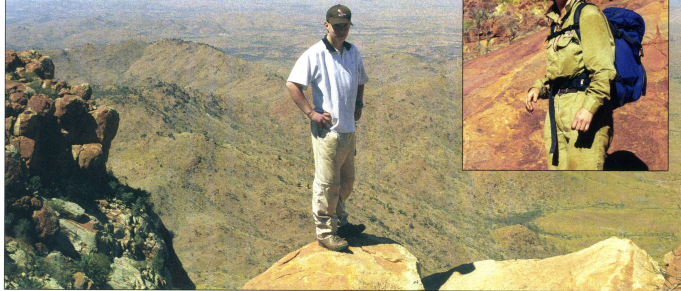
Eventually the watercourse peters out and we had to push our way through dense spinifex on the open face of the upper part of the peak.

After five hours in the hot sun and spinifex, we made it to the summit. Mike boiled a billy of tea and Raelee and Jenni collected samples while the rest of us collected our breath. Central Australia was at our feet: to the south were Mts Razor-

back and Sonder in the distance and, dropping sharply away, the very steep southern face of Mt Zeil. True to the mountain's traditional name, Urlatherkerre, it has a blue-green hue as it is festooned with macrozamia and lichen; hardly a spinifex is to be seen. A tin can in the summit cairn has a few dozen records on scraps of paper from previous climbs. Mike has estimated that up to the mid-1990s the peak may have been climbed only about 80 times.

We returned by a different route, heading west and then north down a very steep gorge which is a succession of huge, dry waterfalls. After this knee-jarring, toe-squeezing descent, Mike, Jenni and Raelee felt the need for further exercise and headed back over another ridge while the rest of us plodded slowly round the flat plain in the hot afternoon to our camp for a beer or two, a well-earned barbecue and a glorious night beneath the stars of the central Australian sky.

Below, Ben on the summit of Mt Zeil, with Mt Razorback in the middle distance and Mt Sonder beyond. **Right**, Raelee on the north side of Mt Zeil.



Mt Ossa, Tasmania

Following the Mt Zeil success, we set off on a Christmas trip to Tassie for an attempt at Mt Ossa. Nick had made several unsuccessful attempts to climb Ossa before, all curtailed by bad, and in some cases atrocious, weather. This attempt was to be a well-planned assault, beginning with a pre-expedition training camp at Freycinet Lodge; we planned to jog to Wineglass Bay and up Mt Amos to hone our fitness for the campaign ahead.

Tasmanian peaks don't yield their summits easily and Ossa's long-range defences must have been working overtime as Luisa broke her arm falling down a steep granite boulder in Freycinet National Park. Despite her plastered arm she valiantly humped her pack up the steep ascent on the Arm River Track and then through the bogs beside Lake Ayr. Although steep at the beginning and hard going, this route from the east is much quicker into the Pelion area than the usual ones from the north or the south on the Overland Track,

either of which would have taken three days each way. The weather was glorious—the Tasmanian weather god was either on holiday or in a strangely benevolent mood as the next day also dawned fine and clear.

We battled the early-morning traffic jam heading south on the Overland Track; then, with the weather still suspiciously clear, we set out round Mt Doris. Luisa again showed great fortitude, scrambling one-armed all the way to the last steep climb on Mt Ossa, at which point she decided that discretion was the better part of valour and sat in the shade of a rock while we completed the climb.

The views on this crystal-clear day were fabulous, making up for Nick's previous failed attempts. All the classic peaks to the north were visible: Barn Bluff, Cradle Mountain, Mt Oakleigh and Mt Pelion West, while to the south was a riot of peaks in the DuCane Range and a clear view of Frenchmans Cap on the distant horizon.



Above, on the Arm River Track below Mt Ossa. Luisa Gough (with broken arm; the legacy of a tumble on the Freycinet Peninsula), left, Jill Gough and Ben. **Below**, Ben on the summit of Mt Ossa. Mt Pelion West is in the middle ground, with Barn Bluff over his left shoulder, and Cradle Mountain further right.



Mt Bogong, Victoria



There is no mistaking Mt Bogong's summit cairn, here dwarfing Ben.

With Mt Ossa under our belts, on our return to Melbourne we made a quick trip up to the Victorian Alps to celebrate the new millennium with an ascent of Mt Bogong. It was a re-ascent for Nick as he had climbed it on one rather forgettable occasion in 1976.

On our Y2K expedition we walked the Staircase Spur route as a long day walk. Jill and Luisa didn't think it necessary to trundle all the way up and relaxed at Bivouac Hut while we completed the ascent amid swirling mists which rolled away on the summit to give us some fine views and a far more pleasant experience than Nick had had 25 years earlier.

Bartle Frere, Queensland

Now the going was becoming serious again. We set the Melbourne Cup weekend the following November for an expedition to Bartle Frere in far north Queensland. We took some risks with the weather as it was about the start of the wet season. In that year (2000), the nearby peak Bellenden Ker was officially the wettest place in Australia—its annual rainfall was 12 461 millimetres!

Not surprisingly, Bartle Frere is surrounded by dense tropical rainforest and, to add to its 'charms', it is host to one of the world's largest snakes, the scrub python. It also has far too many creepers pretending to be scrub pythons. Bartle Frere is a significant walking challenge. It starts from close to sea level, then climbs nearly 1600 metres of steep terrain in tropical heat. One of the guidebooks grades this as a 'gruelling walk' requiring 'peak fitness'. We agree!

It was forecast to be 35°C in Cairns the day we confronted the peak, and we started at 6 am to complete most of the climb in the 'cool' of the morning. It began pleasantly enough but by the time we reached the second crossing of Majuba Creek—just before the climb gets serious—we were totally soaked in sweat and it was only 8 am. Before us was a climb of some 1200 metres in little more than three kilometres. We behaved like a pair of zealous camels in the creek to prepare for the ascent ahead.

It is long and steep; in many places it is like a stepladder of tree roots. It was hot and it was sweaty but we hadn't felt any

steep section of undergrowth, we suddenly arrived in a nondescript pocket-handkerchief of a clearing with a wooden summit sign! The top! We had never felt so exultant. The views were not impressive through the tropical haze but our elation was immense.

However, the day was far from over. We made the long haul back down to Majuba Creek in good time and relaxed and refreshed our feet in the cool water before finishing our walk, very tired but with a triumphant spring in our step.

ing care to avoid any wrong turns, a night in the forest seemed quite possible. At 6 pm, very tired and definitely without a triumphant spring in our step, we burst out of the forest.

As it turned out, we were very lucky with the weather. Although it was intensely hot and humid on the day we climbed, it was dry. The wet* arrived the very next day with tropical ferocity, by which time we were celebrating our climb in the safe confines of a restaurant in Port Douglas.



Ben cools his hot feet in Majuba Creek after descending from Bartle Frere.

thing yet. When we emerged from the dense rainforest into open sunlight at about 1300 metres, the heat was absolutely sapping and there were still some hundreds of metres of climbing left. Just to add a little spice, there was a boulderfield to scramble over.

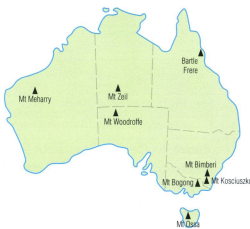
We were becoming quite fatigued and then, as we pushed up through a particularly



The sign tells Ben that it's all over.

That was the plan, anyway. Until somewhere a kilometre or so from the end, as the late afternoon turned to gloom in the dense forest, the spring was decisively removed from our step as we began to worry that we had taken a wrong turn somewhere. The track was no longer familiar and there weren't any track markers to be seen.

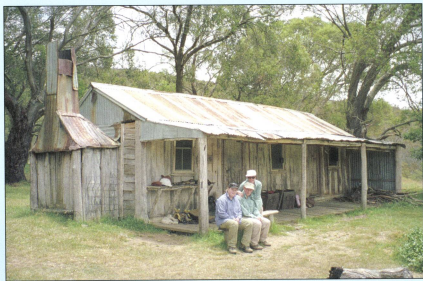
After much anguish we retraced our steps up the hill to a point that was definitely on the right track. By now it was past 5 pm and it had become more than just gloomy. As we very carefully headed down again, tak-



The Goughs' ascents of the highest peak in each State or Territory

State/Territory	Peak	Height (metres)	Area	Date	Maps used
New South Wales	Mt Kosciuszko	2228	Snowy Mountains	2-1-01	Mount Kosciuszko 1:50 000
Victoria	Mt Bogong	1986	Victorian Alps	3-1-00	Bogong Alpine Area 1:50 000
Australian Capital Territory	Mt Bimberi	1913	Bimberi Range	5-1-01	Rendezvous Creek and Rule Point 1:25 00
Queensland	Bartle Frere South Peak	1622	Bellenden Ker Range	3-11-00	Bartle Frere 1:50 000
Tasmania	Mt Ossa	1617	Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park	21-12-99	Cathedral and Achilles 1:25 000 and Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park 1:100 000
Northern Territory	Mt Zeil (Urlatherke)	1531	Macdonnell Ranges	6-9-99	Hermannsburg 1:250 000
South Australia	Mt Woodroffe (Ngintaka Pilpirpa)	1435	Musgrave Ranges	8-7-02	Woodroffe 1:250 000
Western Australia	Mt Meharry (Minjiyanha or Wiribiwirbi)	1253	Hamersley Range	3-4-02	Mount Meharry 1:50 000

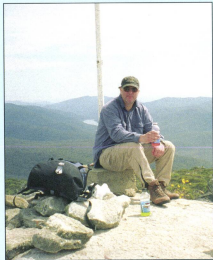
Mt Kosciuszko, New South Wales, and Mt Bimberi, Australian Capital Territory



Mt Kosciuszko was easy to tick off. Nick had driven to the summit of Kosciuszko in the early 1970s before the road was closed at Charlottes Pass and had recently jogged up again. We took the chair-lift from Thredbo up to Crackenback, joining the throngs walking across to the summit. Despite the crowds it was a lovely stroll through alpine meadows.

After Mt Kosciuszko we turned our attention to nearby Mt Bimberi on the border of NSW and the ACT. We followed the Alpine Walking Track past Oldfields Hut and up to Murrays Gap, then climbed the summit ridge.

Two of our guidebooks caution that the route from Murrays Gap to the summit is a steep, trackless scrub-bash. In our experience the navigation is now reasonably easy; a faint but discernible pad makes its way up the ridge to the summit plateau—if you find this pad at the start of the climb, navigation should not be a problem. The summit plateau is a beautiful alpine meadow with great views. And, unlike at Kosciuszko a few days earlier, we were alone.



Top, Luisa, left, Ben and Jill back at Oldfields Hut below Mt Bimberi.

Above, Nick atop Mt Bimberi.

Below, it's a family affair: Nick, left, Luisa, Jill and Ben on top of Australia.



Mt Meharry, Western Australia

Australia is a bloody big country. We were aware of all the 'wide brown land' clichés but the reality only sank in after we had driven all the way from Melbourne to the Pilbarra for the sole purpose of climbing Mt Meharry.

The area around Mt Meharry (Minjiyanha or Wirliwirli) in Karinjini National Park is hot, dry and inhospitable country accessible only by four-wheel drive. We tried to book our car on the train to Perth but it wouldn't fit so the only option was to drive. And drive. And drive. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, 'but is five days' driving to Mt Meharry any different from five days' bog-trotting to Precipitous Bluff?' Nick reasoned.



Nick, left, and Ben at the summit of Mt Meharry.

'Better, in fact', added Ben, 'you don't get leech infested!' April 2002 was set for the expedition.

After 4200 kilometres of driving the final leg into Mt Meharry is along an old mining exploration track, overgrown with spinifex for much of its 15–20 kilometres. There were a few washouts to navigate and plenty of spinifex seeds to remove from the radiator as we pushed through the overgrowth; there were also lots of spiders, angry at being removed from their spinifex bushes.

We rolled out our swags in the middle of the track about four kilometres from Mt Meharry. It was the only clear spot and there was little prospect of being disturbed. As temperatures reached the high 30s during the day we set off very early the next morning to make the 400 metre climb before the worst of the heat.

Mt Meharry is an open, round hill with a light cover of spinifex and is in some ways a bit of an anticlimax: after the distance travelled and the four-wheel drive, the climb was

very easy. We followed an old track to the summit. We could even have driven up but that wasn't permitted by our rules and is probably not sanctioned by the authorities. We were on the summit before 8 am and, after enjoying the splendid views and light breeze, arrived back at camp before 10 am.

We celebrated this summit success with a few days in the glorious gorges at the northern end of the Karijini National Park, then moved on to Cable Beach at Broome, where we began to plan the final expedition.

Mt Woodroffe, South Australia

Mt Woodroffe was named after the nineteenth-century surveyor George Woodroffe Goyder but it has been known since time immemorial as Ngintaka Pilpirpa; we had this one last peak to climb.

It is a peak that captures Australia's long cultural history. It is still in the custody of its traditional owners, the Anangu, and its long spiritual history is still very much alive. We were honoured that it was told to us in

jatjara homeland, a freehold title that was granted to the Anangu in 1981 and we had to have permission from the Anangu and from the traditional owners of Mt Woodroffe and its surrounds, Peter Nyangu and Marg Dagg, to access the area and to climb the mountain.

We arranged our trip through an Anangu-owned tour company, Desert Tracks (www.desert-tracks.com.au). Its manager Jim Montgomery procured all the necessary permits and organised a wonderful week following the story of the Ngintaka. Wati Ngintaka is a giant Perentie Lizard Man from the Dreamtime who traversed this country forming ranges, lakes, mountains and creeks. He provided many of the bush foods the Anangu gather today. Mt Woodroffe is the Wati Ngintaka standing erect,

The next morning Peter guided us along a faint, bone-jarring track for some ten kilometres to the base of Mt Woodroffe. He then indicated the route we should follow: skirting to the west of some deep gorges on the north face and then south-east along a steep ridge towards the summit ridge, then swinging back west to the summit.

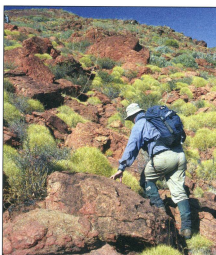
Throughout the climb there was a moderate cover of spinifex and in parts there were spiny, head-high acacias to be pushed through—leather garden gloves are highly recommended. During the lower half of the climb the scree-like rock is very



Local Anangu elder Peter Nyangu and his wife Yuminiya at the foot of Mt Woodroffe.

words, song and dance during a memorable trip in July 2002.

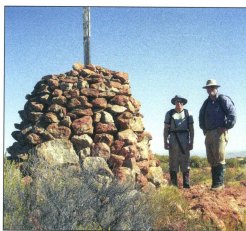
The Musgrave Ranges in the far north of South Australia are in the Anangu Pitjant-



Nick scrambling on the upper reaches of Mt Woodroffe.

and is a source of knowledge for the local people.

We then made our way to Ngarutjara in the shadow of Mt Woodroffe, where we were welcomed by the local Anangu elder, Peter Nyangu. He was clearly delighted to have us there to climb the mountain and was not aware of any other 'white fellas' who had climbed it in the past 20 years. Peter regaled us with further stories of the Wati Ngintaka and of hunting wallabies on the flanks of Mt Woodroffe in his youth.

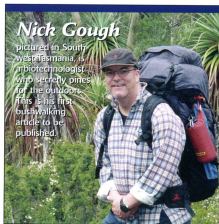


Ben, left, and Nick at the summit of Mt Woodroffe.

loose and was awkward and tiring on the descent.

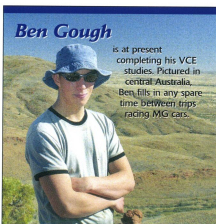
We took the walk slowly on a clear July day, making the 700 metre climb to the summit in three hours. There we relaxed to celebrate the success of our venture and to savour the solitude and the serenity—until we were joined by a party of 25 geologists! Quite by chance the Australian Geological Society was holding a field trip to the Musgrave Ranges and had arranged to climb Mt Woodroffe on the very same day. Despite its isolation, we encountered more people on Mt Woodroffe than on any other peak except Mt Kosciuszko!

Mt Woodroffe is a beautiful desert mountain with a living history and it provided a fitting climax to our venture. We were honoured to have been allowed to climb it.



Nick Gough

pictured in South West Tasmania, is an environmentalist and author. This is his first bushwalking article to be published.



Ben Gough

is at present completing his VCE studies. Pictured in central Australia, Ben fits in any spare time between trips, racing MG cars.

A climbing first?

This venture has been immensely satisfying. It has required travelling and walking in diverse environments, from the Alps to the tropics and the deserts. It was physically demanding; it was logistically intriguing; it was enlightening culturally. It took us out of our guidebooks and introduced us to an Australia of which many don't see enough. It also leaves us wondering whether anyone else has 'bagged' this list of peaks. 🏔️

Death in the Mountains

What went wrong, and what can we learn? By **Harley Wright**

SEAMANS HUT IS A REMOTE, SILENT SENTINEL only a few kilometres from Mt Kosciuszko below the rocky ramparts of Etheridge Ridge. Normally only visited by a few cross-country skiers, on a late August day in 1999 it was a buzz of activity.

There were more skidoos (snowmobiles) parked outside than skis. There was an incessant throbbing from helicopters which searched the headwaters of the Snowy River and adjoining areas. Despite the lovely skiing conditions my wife and I felt sad.

It was now more than two weeks since four young Sydney men had left Thredbo to go snowboarding at Lake Albina. We listened to the activities of the searching police and discussed the situation with other skiers. We reluctantly concluded that the chances of finding them alive now were very slim.

Laurie Seaman and Evan Hayes had died near here in 1928 when they were caught in a blizzard. Seaman's parents had Seamans Hut built as a memorial to their son and as a mountain shelter.

One of the young men now missing had been at school with our son so we could relate to the parents' anguish. But what had happened to the four snowboarders? They had planned to sleep in snow-caves. They had previously camped in the snow several times. They were believed to be well equipped. A heavy blizzard had raged the first night when they went out from the top of the Thredbo chair-lift and had continued throughout the next day. Had they been caught out and suffered hypothermia before they could dig a snow-cave? Perhaps drugs, including alcohol, had affected their judgement? Had they all gone over a cornice? Had they descended into the rugged, tree-covered gorges of Leather Barrel Creek or Lady Northcotes Canyon—and hence were not visible to the searching choppers? None of these options seemed to explain their total disappearance.

If they had dug their snow-cave as planned, perhaps a faulty stove had poisoned them with carbon monoxide? Or was it possible that they had suf-

'[Nothing] seemed to explain their total disappearance.'

2 NEWS TWO DAYS AGO

Herald Sun, Wednesday, November 17, 1999



Close look: Supt. Charlie Sanderson crawls towards the site where ski stocks were seen sticking out of the snow near Thredbo yesterday.

Death in an icy tomb

By MARK LUDLOW

A BRADSHAW camp by abandoned ski stocks yesterday guided searchers to an ice cave where four missing snowboarders were estimated three months ago.

Even better, six light blue sleeping bags were visible inside the cave.

The late-morning discovery that made it so easy to find the Thredbo snowboarders that had already been around several times near Thredbo when the four men from Sydney — Tim Friend, 25, Dean Pritchard, 26, and Paul Seaman, 24 — vanished on a three-day snowboarding adventure.

"It's on the table as to whether we would have been able to find them if the snow had been deeper," says Pritchard.



Paul Seaman



Tim Friend



Dean Pritchard



Mark Ludlow



Aerial: the hole in the snow.

Lapsed under the weight of heavy snowfall in the icy tomb.

The wind was howling.



BODIES FOUND Thredbo Ridge

The Herald Sun, 17 November 1999

focated because the heavy snowfall sealed them in?

During the second week the snowboarders were missing I spoke to the Austrian-born proprietor of a cross-country ski shop who was very experienced in skiing around the world. He said it was extremely doubtful that the four had suffocated in a snow-cave, that even when buried in avalanches people could live a reasonable time before they suffocated. His views reinforced my own.

Virtually all guides to snow-caving note the need for a ventilation hole made with a stick or ski; and that it should be kept open, but that it is all right to block (not seal) the tunnel entrance with a rucksack to limit cold draughts.

On 16 November the receding snow revealed the bodies of the four young men four kilometres from the Thredbo chair-lift and 1.3 kilometres short of Seamans Hut. Reports indicated that they were in a snow-cave, were not in their sleeping-bags and one appeared to have been trying to dig out. The State Coroner John Abernethy dispensed with the holding of inquests into the deaths of the four snowboarders as the manner and cause of death was clear to him and to the families. But not to me, or to others active in snow-camping until some aspects were clarified by detailed investigation.

In the file at the Glebe Coroner's Court, Dr Allan Cala's autopsy report on one of the snowboarders reveals the 'cause of death' as

out of their sleeping-bags and partly dressed in wet-weather clothes.

Garry K Smith led a party that also camped in a snow-cave nearby on the weekend that the four snowboarders disappeared when there was a heavy dump of snow. Smith said that on the Sunday night 'around 2 am I awoke to find I was breathing a little more deeply than normal, and had a slightly elevated pulse rate. Having experienced foul air in limestone caves, I knew that the oxygen in the snow-cave was not being replenished as fast as we were breathing it. But I felt sure we had many more hours of air left as the porous snow does breathe to a certain extent. I went back to sleep. Once David la

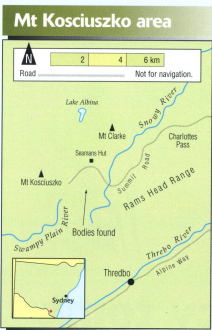
quicker at higher elevations, that is, above 3000 metres. Persons who have a blunted respiratory drive from disease or certain drugs (narcotics) might not experience arousal.'

The evidence indicates that the four snowboarders were aroused by the symptoms of high carbon dioxide levels. It seems that they could not get fresh air quickly enough.

We don't suffocate in bedrooms at home. So how long can you breathe in a totally sealed snow-cave or igloo? In his written evidence to the inquiry, Tim Macartney-Snape notes that the 'relatively wet snow blowing in small particles would have formed a very dense snow-pack, making air



A well-made snow-cave. Illustration by Murray Frederick used with the permission of Australian Geographic.



'accidental suffocation' with 'other significant conditions contributing to the death' being 'possible hypothermia'.

The pathologist's analysis of blood and urine showed no detectable levels of alcohol, cannabis or a range of other drugs. He also reported a normal blood level of carbon monoxide at one per cent, indicating that the young men were not poisoned by carbon monoxide from a faulty stove.

There were various indications of arousal or action by all four snowboarders immediately prior to death. They were all found

friend who was sleeping in a tent outside punched the hole into the cave this cleared the air and I was all right [at 3 am].

'Foul air' is high carbon dioxide and low oxygen. These symptoms of increased breathing and heart rate are from high carbon dioxide levels, not from low oxygen levels.

If you are sleeping soundly after a hard day's skiing and fresh snow seals your ventilation, would the decreasing oxygen levels lead first to unconsciousness, then death? Dr Colin Grissom, researching avalanche death and survival, monitored the breathing of subjects buried in the snow. He confirms that 'as carbon dioxide rises while breathing in an enclosed space it will cause a sensation of breathlessness sufficient to wake normal persons sleeping in a snow-cave at low or moderate elevation. If carbon dioxide rises too high, however, it will displace oxygen in the alveoli and the combination of high carbon dioxide (which has a sedative effect at very high levels) and low oxygen will result in unconsciousness. This will happen much

transfer through it very slow'. Perhaps in some Australian snow conditions one cannot rely on a good supply of air from the porous snow of a snow-cave or igloo.

Smith's snow-caves were each about 10.5 cubic metres (3.5 metres x 2 metres x 1.5 metres) and held two people, that is, held a bit over five cubic metres of air a person, which would hold sufficient air, if completely fresh, to last a bit longer than six hours if immediately sealed and not allowing for any exchange with the porous snow.

Before going to bed for the night you should totally refresh the air—especially if you have been cooking, which consumes oxygen and produces carbon dioxide just like you do. This will mean clearing the entrance and flapping a sleeping-bag or mat to refresh the air.

Importantly, what lessons could be learned from this tragedy? How safe or dangerous is it to sleep in a snow-cave or igloo on a regular basis or even in an emergency if benighted without a tent? Is it worth the risk?

A Web search for 'suffocation' and 'snow-cave' gave 28 hits. Only one of these referred to a real case of people suffocating in snow-caves in this way. And that reference was to the Thredbo/Seamans Hut tragedy. The only other death was in a snow-cave which had had a large dump of snow put on it by a snow-clearing machine; namely, human error.

Clearly it is necessary to check whether snow is restricting your ventilation. This might be done in the course of normal, wakeful periods at night. Check whether the ventilation hole is open—move a stock or ski up and down in it. Check that the entrance still has gaps. For extra safety and peace of

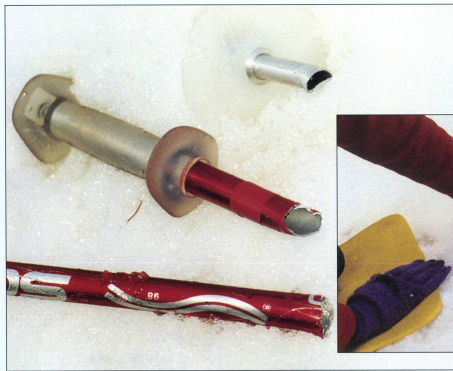
based on avalanche survival studies and equipment.

The AvaLung has been designed and tested as a safety device for people skiing in avalanche-prone areas. The device allows a buried person to breathe air from an artificial air pocket (volume 500 millilitres) in the body of the snow.

I have tested an easily made stock-snorkel from the surface of the snow. It took only a few minutes to break off both ends of an aluminium tube stock. I breathed air from the snow, quite easily, for ten minutes. If your snow-cave has foul air, it is essential that your snorkel is sucking fresh air from the porous snow and not from the expired

- Sleep with your head near a vent hole where an ingress of fresh snow might awaken you.
- Keep all digging implements and a torch close to hand and be very clear where they are before you go to bed.
- Keep a stock or ski in the vent hole to help to clear it during the night, and keep other skis and stocks for making another vent hole or breathing snorkels as a last resort. But an upright ski or stock outside is also desirable as a marker of your location.
- Determine the best direction to make an alternative vent hole if the existing one gets blocked and can't be unblocked.
- Set an alarm to check ventilation—and the weather outside.

Of course, if you need shelter when caught out without a tent, you don't have to rely on a snow-cave or an igloo. Always carry a bivvy-bag and a small foam mat, and this should be at least life saving, albeit not too comfortable for a night. ☼



Left, broken stock ends. Right, packing snow around a protruding stock-snorkel. Photos by Harley Wright



mind you can set an alarm at one- to three-hourly intervals.

If I were to find myself snowed in and breathing fast from high carbon dioxide in a snow-cave or buried tent I would first attempt to unblock the entrance or breathing hole to get fresh air. The tail end of a ski can be pushed in a metre before the binding hinders it. Or a stock pushed handle first into the snow can make a small hole.

If these failed, as a last resort I would use a stock as a snorkel to access fresh air in the body of the snow. After breaking off each end of the stock, I would push it as far as I could into the snow. Snow blocks it at first, but when withdrawn, tapped sharply and flicked, the blocking snow is removed. With the 'snorkel' reinserted and sealed by pressing snow around it where it protrudes, I would suck and breathe 'remote' air with ordinary oxygen levels and exhale into the cave. However, this of course increases the cave's carbon dioxide levels. The principle is

air in your own chamber—hence the need to seal where the snorkel protrudes into the cave by packing a collar of snow tightly around it.

As applies to any adventurous sports with high risk levels, it is desirable to get formal training in snow-camping with professional guides or specialist groups such as cross-country ski clubs.

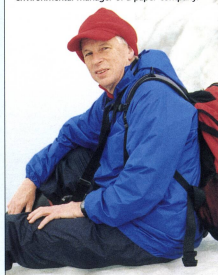
If you do run out of fresh air in a snow-cave or igloo at an altitude of below 3000 metres the physiological stresses of deeper and faster breathing should arouse you to the danger. A snow-cave still seems to me to be a suitable shelter if the following precautions are observed.

Suggested safeguards against snow-cave suffocation

- Vigorously ventilate the cave before you go to bed.

Harley Wright

loves skiing and bushwalking in the Mt Kosciuszko area. As well as kayaking (which he has done in both Polar regions) his passion is native flora. He is an expert on weed plumes caused by run-off in urban bushland, and promotes abatement measures. He is environmental manager of a paper company.



DISAPPEARING TRICK

Searching for Vanishing Falls

Graham Wootton describes a trip into the heart of Tasmania's South-west



BY THE EARLY 1970s MUCH OF SOUTH-WEST Tasmania had been explored and the great bushwalking challenges had been met. Federation Peak was climbed in 1949 and had been dispensed with in a weekend in 1965. A traverse of the Western Arthur Range was completed in 1960 and by 1972 it had been done in a day. Were any mysteries and major, unexplored landmarks left in the South-west?

A major waterfall on the Salisbury River, in unexplored country behind Precipitous Bluff, seemed

to fit the bill. First sighted by pioneer South-west aviator Lloyd Jones in about 1947, the water flowing over the falls seemed mysteriously to disappear at the base of the cascade and the riverbed appeared to be dry for several kilometres down-

The heart of Tasmania's South-west; the view west from Mt Bobs to Federation Peak. All photos by Graham Wootton



stream. With the unlikely but possible exception of an unrecorded visit by an early prospector, no one had reached the falls, now named Vanishing Falls, on foot. Although quite close to the South Coast Track, the last six kilometres of extremely thick scrub had discouraged walkers from attempting to reach the area.

By mid-1973, a number of groups were making plans to reach the falls and competition to be the first was keen. There still existed some of that unique thrill that comes from exploring unknown country, a rare commodity.

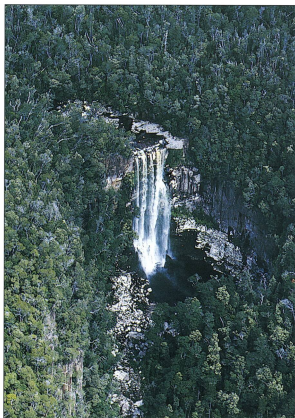
In September 1973 a party from Elizabeth Matriculation College attempted to reach the falls from the South Coast Track. However, bad weather and patches of impenetrable scrub forced them to turn back short of their goal. In November 1973, Jeanette Collin and Attila Vrana, from the small Manuka Club, reached the falls. They took quite a different route from the first party—they started from the Picton River valley and reached the falls in five days, walking by way of Mt Bobs. After exploring the falls area they climbed on to the ridge at the back of Precipitous Bluff and traversed to New River Lagoon—a distance of nine kilometres which took four days of bashing through some of the worst scrub in the South-west.

Although Vanishing Falls had been reached, interest in the area was still high and we went ahead with our trip, planned for January–February 1974. Jeanette Collin's description of the scrub at the back of Precipitous Bluff was not inviting. We had a good look at the area from the air when we were dropping supplies at Prion Beach for the last few days of the trip. Still a Blue Mountains boy at heart, I was attracted by the idea of travelling down the rivers rather than scrub-bashing. The bed of the Salisbury River looked as though it would be easy going. However, the banks of the New River were heavily forested and we knew that there was a very bad area of baueria for at least a kilometre upstream from New River Lagoon. Liloing was a common method of travelling the rivers in the Blue Mountains when the banks became impassable, so why not on the New River? And so our plans were set.

The party was made up of three Tasmanian–Rick Rolls, Keith Antonsen and myself, with two Sydney bushwalkers—Phil Butt and Richard Wood. Jim England, legendary aviator and one of the instigators of the trip, unfortunately had to withdraw at the last moment due to suspected appendicitis.

After being driven to the starting point by our families, we set out from the Picton River on 27 January. With equipment, food for ten days and the essential Lilos, our packs each weighed about 29 kilograms at the start of the trip. For most of us it was our first long trip for quite a while and sore shoulders and backs were common complaints. These were the days before hip belts and ergonomic designs.

For the first two days we were following a track recently cut to Mt Bobs by the Manuka Club. Although the walk through the forest on the banks of the Picton River was relatively easy, the heat slowed us all considerably—apparently the temperature reached 35°C in Hobart. We could not help but be inspired by the magnificent forest along the Picton River. Huge eucalypts, up to 60 metres high, grow in profusion along the banks and ferny glades are interspersed with scrubby sections. By lunch-time we had reached the Farmhouse Creek junction, so we called an extended stop and took our last opportunity to cool off on the river.



The remote and elusive Vanishing Falls from the air. This view of the riverbed below the falls explains the origin of their name. Right, Vanishing Falls and the cairn made by the first party to reach them.

After lunch we headed up Farmhouse Creek towards Mt Bobs. The track was so vague that we found it quicker to walk up the open creek-bed. Little did we realise that the route we were following would become a popular trade route to the Cracroft valley and Federation Peak by way of Moss Ridge.

This area is well known for the large number of tiger snakes along the track. The scent of leatherwood was strong in the air as we pitched camp at 7 pm on the banks of the creek, still well short of our goal, Pine Lake. The air was now reasonably cool and the tiredness of the day dissolved as we sat around the camp-fire under a starry sky. As there was little sign of any change in the weather, we dispensed with our tents and slept out on our Lilos. This was to be the first of four

such nights sleeping out, a rather unusual experience in the South-west.

On the second day, the weather was slightly cooler and we left the creek and headed up a long ridge towards Mt Bobs. The vegetation changed from eucalypt forest at the lower level to myrtle, sassafras and King Billy pine as we gained height. Some of the pines were the biggest any of us had seen—we estimated them to be up to 25 metres high. Occasional high points along the track afforded spectacular views of the Cracroft valley and the Federation Peak massif. Incredible populations of March flies inhabited each of these open areas. Fortunately, South-west March flies are

sluggish and very easy to swat—an action which quickly became instinctive.

At about 3 pm we reached our previous day's goal, Pine Lake, and decided to move on to Lake Sydney, an easy, one kilometre walk up the

'at times we resorted to crawling on our hands and knees to get our packs and ourselves through the scrub.'

valley. We were a bit perturbed that there was no evidence of a creek in the valley as our water-supplies were becoming short. When the first party member broke through the scrub into the Lake Sydney basin there was a cry of horror, 'the lake's dry, someone's pulled the plug'. After further inspection we realised that the football-field-sized grassy area was not Lake Sydney but the limestone sink-hole area that drains the outlet creek below the lake. Normally this sink-hole system is the only drainage from the lake and the water reappears somewhere downstream in Farmhouse Creek. After heavy rain the capacity of the limestone drainage system is exceeded, the sink-hole fills and water floods down the valley. It was quite a surprise to find a very similar model of the Vanishing Falls drainage system so early in the trip.

After exploring and photographing the sink-hole we climbed up the short slope to lake level and made camp. Lake Sydney is one of the most extraordinarily beautiful places in Tasmania. Dense forest rings most of the lake and a variety of Tasmanian flora is represented. Pandani, King Billy pine, tea-tree, banksia and myrtle grow in profusion and small creeks wander among grass kept short by browsing marsupials. On the eastern side of the lake an open, grassed area



with small beaches and warm, shallow water is an ideal camp-site. In this water was a large population of tadpoles. Several theories were advanced that wherever there are a lot of tadpoles there would soon be a lot of frogs and, consequently, large numbers of snakes to feed on the frogs. Fortunately, these theories proved groundless.

Another night under the stars and a warm, sunny morning followed. By this stage we had shaken off most of the cobwebs of civilisation and were beginning to feel quite fit. Rick remembered why he had been a bit faint at the top of each hill—the pint of blood he had donated the day before we left!

The morning of the third day was spent climbing from Lake Sydney to the Mt Bobs plateau. In contrast to the surrounding country, the summit of Mt Bobs is a flat, very open plateau, carpeted in cushion plants and pineapple grass. To the west across the gorge of the New River are the Eastern Arthur Range and Federation Peak. To the south Precipitous Bluff dominates the skyline.

This was our last taste of open country for many days. After lunch we headed south and dropped off the edge of the Mt Bobs plateau on to a ridge with the intriguing name Bobs Knobs. Bob has three knobs, each one notable for the ferocious scrub that surrounds it. By 6.30 pm we had only reached the saddle before Bobs Knobs One and decided to make camp where we could.

Fortunately, after about half an hour's search Phil found a small pool just big enough for us to fill our water buckets. We were anxious about the ridge ahead as the previous party had not found any water.

Another clear, starry night followed and we again dispensed with tents and found enough flat areas among the scrub for five Lilos. The sound of Lilos being deflated each morning is one of the most notable memories from this trip!

After a hastily prepared breakfast we left camp at 7.45 am, keen to come to grips with the ridge. In anticipation of a dry day we had filled every conceivable container in our packs with water and had about three litres each. Again the weather was fine. Valley

platforms for the Lilos. The weather was still amazingly good and once again we dispensed with the tents.

As we were cooking, a light plane flew over and we guessed that it would be Jim England keeping a lookout for us—which we verified later. That night we slept a little more soundly. Although our three kilometres of progress that day seemed amazingly little, we were confident of reaching the Salisbury River the next day and that it would also be our last day of bad scrub.

Our hopes of a short day to the Salisbury River were soon dashed. To the non-bush-walker it may seem rather crazy to spend your holidays forcing a way through thick scrub. However, there are many compensa-

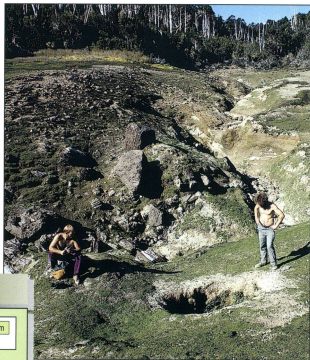
tions which usually outweigh the effort entailed. The unique experience of travelling in virtually unexplored country; the feeling of being completely dependent on your own resources and the satisfaction when the goal is reached combine to provide a much richer experience than would be the case if the walking were always easy.

By 4 pm we had traversed to the end of Bobs Knobs and begun our 700 metre descent to the Salisbury River. At 7 pm we broke from the scrub on to the delightfully open gravel bed of the river. Spirits were high as we drank our fill and washed off the sweat and dirt. The hardships of the previous two days disappeared like magic as we set about cooking a huge evening meal. Anticipating a relatively easy day ahead, we sat around the camp-fire until well after 11 pm.

When we awoke on day six the weather had finally broken and there was a light drizzle. After a quick breakfast we set out for the falls, about seven kilometres upstream from our camp. Boulder hopping up the riverbed was quite easy and we made rapid progress.

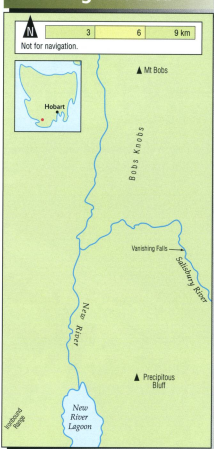
After about three kilometres we noticed something rather eerie. The quite strong flow in the river was fading away to nothing and only 200 metres further up the riverbed was dry for the remaining four kilometres to the falls. We couldn't find any obvious points from which the water was issuing.

At about 1 pm we rounded the final bend in the river and finally saw the object of our trip. All thoughts of lunch were cast aside until we had photographed the falls and added our names to the visitors' book, concealed in a cairn built by Jeanette and Attila in November. Unfortunately, as a result of the long spell of dry weather we had enjoyed on our way in, the falls were less than their spectacular best. The brooding, over-cast sky helped to enhance the mystique of the area and we weren't disappointed. We didn't have time to explore the area thoroughly and could only conjecture the path of the water from the falls to the point where it reappears downstream. Cavers have



Keith Antonysen, left, and Rick Rolls in the sink-hole area at Lake Sydney.

Vanishing Falls area



mists rising with the warmth of the morning sun spilled over the ridges in huge waves.

The traverse of Bobs Knobs One was relatively straightforward and by 10 am we were in the next saddle. After a short, open, grassy flat the scrub closed in again and our progress slowed to a snail's pace. Most of the time we walked through a dwarf forest with tough, springy limbs that made our progress with bulky rucksacks very difficult. The many fallen logs were a chaotic mess and at times we resorted to crawling on our hands and knees to get our packs and ourselves through the scrub.

By 4 pm we had traversed Bobs Knobs Two, about three kilometres from our campsite the night before. It was obvious that we would not make the Salisbury River that night, so we descended some 200 metres on the western side of the ridge until we found a plentiful supply of cold, clear water in a small creek. We set up camp on a 35° slope in dense myrtle forest and chopped five

since explored and mapped this subterranean drainage system in detail.

After lunch, the drizzle turned to light rain so we abandoned the idea of climbing to the top of the falls. Yours truly headed back to camp slightly ahead of the rest of the party, who had elected to spend a little longer in the area. I had noted that it had taken three hours to reach the falls from the camp and, as the rain would make walking slower on the way back, looking out for the camp-site

graphically embarrassed' and to thank them for their concern.

After heavy overnight rain, the river level had risen considerably. By lunch-time at the New River junction, the level was up by more than half a metre. We could hear the distinctive clunk of boulders rolling along the riverbed—obviously it was not a day for Liloing. We set up camp early and spent the afternoon drying out our wet clothes and making repairs to our equipment.

corks. Reluctantly, we resorted to wading down the edge of the lagoon.

When we reached Prion Beach on day ten we recovered our air drops intact. After setting up camp at the western end of the beach we cooked up an enormous feast and celebrated with our bottle of wine.

After a further two days' walking along the South Coast Track, we arrived at Bathurst Harbour and the King homestead. Although they were less challenging than the



On New River Lagoon under the watchful gaze of Precipitous Bluff.

after three hours' walking would suffice. I had not allowed for my fixation with getting back to camp for tea as soon as possible and that my foot was well and truly down on the accelerator pedal.

After three hours I had in fact already walked past the camp-site and continued down the Salisbury River. Still no camp-site—I pushed a little harder! 'Funny, I don't remember that major creek entering on the right bank this morning.' Oh well, just keep walking. Another kilometre and still no camp-site—perhaps I really should have a look at the map'. The horrible truth dawned on me: I had missed the camp-site, continued down the final three kilometres of the Salisbury River and that creek entering on the right bank was actually the New River.

It was 5.30 pm so I made a rapid reverse thrust and headed back to camp before I ran out of daylight. The others, by now in a state of considerable anxiety, had hung a pair of underpants on a prominent bush by the river to mark the camp. I walked in to camp at about 7.15 pm and, trying to act as nonchalantly as possible, said, 'just doing a bit of recce downstream'. The torrent of abuse that immediately erupted convinced me to give up my act, admit that I had been 'geo-

The next morning was fine but the river level was still high. As our food supplies were running low, we decided to push on down the river-bank rather than wait any longer. We encountered a few patches of moderate scrub at first, then to our delight we walked through open myrtle forest with huge man ferns and native laurel below the canopy. By 5 pm we had travelled six kilometres and we set up camp above New River Lagoon; our intention was to travel the remaining distance on the river.

The next morning brought the welcome sun and warmth we had been waiting for. After lining our rucksacks with waterproof bags, we inflated our Lilos and took to the river. Initially only Keith and I took the plunge, the others preferred to continue walking. The beginning of the bauera thickets soon changed their mind. After a week of pushing through scrub, two hours paddling down the river was heaven. Thick forest lined the banks of the New River and, towering over a 1000 metres above, the cliffs of Precipitous Bluff glistened from the rain of several days before.

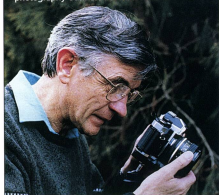
We had hoped to paddle across New River Lagoon on the Lilos but a stiff sea breeze had raised a chop on the lagoon and we were soon bobbing up and down like

earlier part of the trip, the magnificent beaches and coastal scenery were a refreshing change from the thick scrub and forest that predominated on the route to Vanishing Falls.

A fitting climax to the trip was a flight back to Cambridge from Bathurst Harbour on a beautiful, cloudless afternoon. ☀

Graham Wootton

moved to Tasmania in 1971 to work as a structural engineer. His outdoors interests include bush-walking, cross-country skiing, mountain-bike riding and wilderness photography. He runs a photography business in Hobart.



GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS

A Stroll Down the Goulburn

Wildlife and sandstone cliffs, by Anthony Dunk

MY QUEST TO EXPLORE GOULBURN RIVER National Park began several years ago when I first noticed its large, green boundary on a map of New South Wales. I had walked a lot of the country to the south, in Wollemi and Yengo National Parks, but this park at the top of the Hunter Valley remained a mystery. Hardly anyone had heard of it and even fewer had actually been there.

In the summer of 2000–2001, I headed up to Merriwa with a friend and then

drove south through the park to Lees Pinch lookout. From this vantage point we could see a dark-green swath of eucalypts stretching east and west into the distance. Yellow cliffs broke through the forest, marking the meandering course of the river.

We continued south along the road only to find that the causeway was flooded by about a metre of fast-flowing water. A local farmer with a heavily loaded ute ploughed across the swollen river but

Easy river-side walking below mighty sandstone bluffs. All photos by Anthony Dunk

even with my four-wheel-drive station-wagon I felt that turning back was the only safe option. I drove home disappointed but knew that I would soon return.

In August 2001 the opportunity to explore the park arose again. Bruce Stafford from Sydney University Bushwalkers had organised a weekend walk from Meads Crossing down the river to Morrisons Flat. Apart from the inconvenience of having to ask a local property owner for permission to cross his land, it was a great walk.

The open, grassy river-banks made walking easy and the abundance of wombats and kangaroos grazing, even during the day, added interest. On Saturday night we camped near the base of impressive, 70 metre cliffs. The next day we headed back to our cars. All too soon our short exploratory walk was over. I knew I'd just have to come back and see more of this great country.

In September 2002 when the weather was pleasant and I needed a break from work I organised a three-day walk in the park. Bruce decided to come along and another friend, Sam Roberts, also thought it sounded like fun.

Sam and I set off from Gosford early on Friday afternoon and reached the old Wollombi Pub for a beer and a hamburger on the sunny verandah. We could have stayed for hours but the Hunter Valley beckoned. Our next stop was a winery north of Broke where we sampled

***'Wineries and wilderness—
what a
combination!'***

the local wines before choosing a few reds that would be great for our expedition. Wineries and wilderness—what a combination!

Driving along the bumpy road on the southern edge of Goulburn River National Park, we approached Lees Pinch just as the sun was dipping towards the horizon. We crossed the river at the causeway which had previously been too high to cross and drove up the hill to the lookout. We walked the short circuit, rushing to get to the best lookout rock while there was still light for photos. It was a perfect spring day and the sunset over the distant western edge of Goulburn River National Park was warm and golden.

In the twilight we drove the last few kilometres to White Box camp and set up our tent. Sam chose a spot for our camp-fire in front of a comfortable log, then we settled in to cook dinner and admire the stars. Bruce was due to arrive later that evening. A friendly possum



climbed down from a tree to visit us while we drank our way through a bottle of red.

We were up early the next morning and did a short car shuttle. We left my car at Lees Pinch and walked west from White Box camp along the ridge towards the river. The ridgetop walking was pretty easy and soon

is any indication, wombats are much more agile than you would imagine!

Once we were in the side creek the walking was as easy and open as I remembered from my previous Goulburn River trip. We only had a short distance to travel as Bruce was joining us for a day walk and we had

really caught our attention were the large numbers of carp on the sand and mud on the bottom of the river. Schools of this pest stir up the sediments in long trails, turning the clear water cloudy.

Since we had time to waste and were curious, one of us waded into the river and attempted to catch a fish. This was easier said than done; someone had the bright idea of stunning a carp with a sharp blow from a stick. The fish were moving around fast, but in the shallow water the technique eventually paid off and we landed a two or three kilogram carp on the grassy bank.

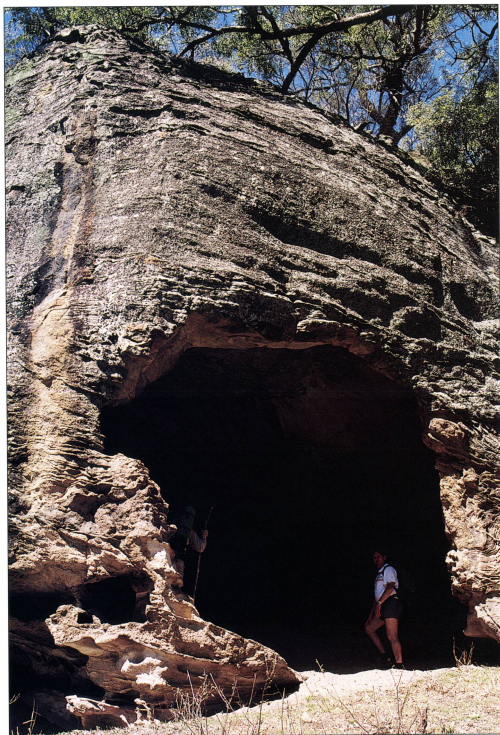
When we reached Rocky Creek we made a small fire and threw the fish on the hot coals. It took a long time to cook; eventually it was done. Bruce and I sampled the meat. It was edible but certainly not a great taste. I don't think either of us will be in a hurry to try it again!

After lunch, Sam and I followed Bruce up Rocky Creek to make sure he got back safely to the track which led to his car. The ridge where we decided to climb out of the creek was covered with sharp scrub. The leaves of the plants were shaped like mini boat-hooks. We eventually found the track and left Bruce to make his own way. Sam and I returned to Rocky Creek along a side creek which was much easier. We then strolled down the river for about a kilometre and made camp on an elevated, grassy flat below a 70 metre cliff.

Sunday was as perfect as the rest of the weekend and we looked forward to another great day of exploring. We were now solely drinking river water that we had boiled the night before. It tasted remarkably good considering that it came from a river with cattle tramping through it and carp stirring up sediment!

Our first stop for the day was at the twin, 50 metre waterfalls marked on the topographical map. Although they are difficult to see from the river they were worth a look. We found one of the falls up a short, narrow canyon. It had only a trickle of water but with its intricate, curved channel it would look spectacular after rain.

While we were looking for the second fall we found a massive slab of rock which had been separated from the cliff, leaving a metre wide slot. It was tempting to climb through the gap but the slab seemed precariously balanced. After morning tea we continued downstream. Our final goal was to explore an interesting canyon that heads north-west up a side creek. This wide, dry canyon is walled by 100 metre cliffs and is a cool, shady world in comparison with the sunny, open flats along the river.



Exploring a large, room-like cave near the river.

we were at a small clearing marked on the map. From this point we descended into a side creek to avoid the 40 metre cliffs that flank the river along this section. There are a few small cliffs in the side creek but we soon found a wombat track which climbed steeply down through the rocks. If this track

already decided that he should walk back along Rocky Creek to his car.

As we strolled along the river-bank we saw roos, wombats and a goanna. It was becoming a wildlife safari! A few earmarked cattle were also grazing, possibly they belonged to farmers further downstream. What

We walked up the canyon for about 500 metres. Due to the abundance of sandpaper fig trees I marked the unnamed creek Sandpaper Fig Creek on my map. The leaves of these trees feel just like sandpaper and I've read that Aborigines used them to smooth their wooden implements.

We walked back upstream to a large hairpin bend in the river and had a leisurely lunch. Then we bid the river farewell and headed up a side creek which angles south-east towards the road. The topographical map we had been using for the walk had the unfortunate name 'Mount Misery'. This seemed like a misnomer for the area but the creek was to change our opinion! At first, it was easy going: there was an interesting side branch with multiple caves and a short section of canyon. Then it was miserable. The scrub was sharp, prickly and close. Cliffs on both sides prevented our escape on to the ridge. Eventually we found a pass up through the smaller cliffs on the left and climbed out of the scrubby creek. Unfortunately, it was just as thick on the spur! Not until we reached the top of the ridge did the scrub subside. When we finally stumbled on to the road we realised that the ordeal had taken only an hour. In the heat of the afternoon sun it had seemed much longer! We soon reached my car and joyfully

guzzled some cool, clean water from a bottle in the back. We drove north to Merriwa, admiring the outline of Coolah Tops in the distance, then headed south for Wollombi. Four hours later we were home.

Back in the office a few days later my head was still filled with memories of the towering, yellow cliffs and walking among the spreading box trees. Like all good trips, this one had come to an end. Already I was planning to explore another section of the

river—Morrisons Flat to Drummers Flat. Maybe next spring!

Goulburn River National Park


Goulburn River National Park is just north of Wollumbi National Park and is part of the northernmost tip of the rugged country known as the Greater Blue Mountains. It was gazetted in 1983 and contains almost

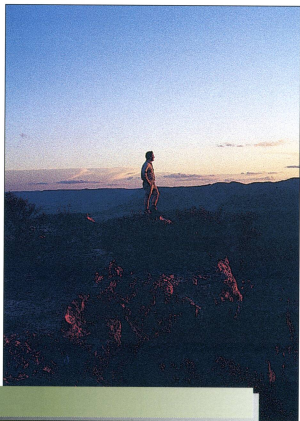
70 000 hectares of land. The main features of the park are the river gorge and the prominent basalt peak, Mt Dangar, in the east. As the park is in the western end of the Hunter Valley it is dry country but the river is an oasis and almost always contains water.

Aborigines lived near the cliff-lined banks of the Goulburn River for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Some of the abundant caves and overhangs along the river still contain evidence of their long occupation in the form of deposits, axe-grinding grooves and rock art. About 300 sites of Aboriginal significance are in the park.

The Goulburn River valley has been farmed since the early 1800s and has an interesting history. Some of the events portrayed in the book *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* took place at Poggie Station near Lees Pinch in 1900. Jimmy Governor and his brother Joe murdered several locals as part of their crime spree across NSW.

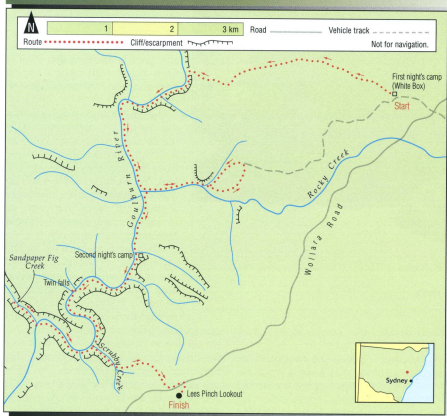
Camp-sites for vehicle-based camping are available in the park at the White Box, Spring Gully and Big River camping grounds. White Box is on the Merriwa—Wollar road north of Lees Pinch; the other two are about 20 kilometres north of Wollar along Mogo Lane. White Box hasn't any facilities at present. Spring Gully and Big River have pit toilets and barbecue plates.

Further information on Goulburn River National Park is available in *The NPA Guide to National Parks of Northern New South Wales*, by Peter Wright and members of the National Parks Association of NSW Inc. 



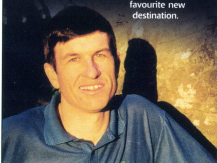
Enjoying the sunset from Lees Pinch lookout.

Goulburn River



Anthony Dunk

has written two bushwalking guidebooks and works as a software engineer. Having grown up on a remote property in New England, NSW, he feels an affinity for wilderness. The Goulburn River is a favourite new destination.



Promontory Punishment

'A day walk on steroids.' Article and photo by **Eric Tlozek**

MY UNCLE APPROACHED ME WITH AN IDEA; he wanted to walk a three-day circuit at Wilsons Promontory in a single day. It's a 45 kilometre walk on well-maintained tracks in Victoria's most popular National Park—a good idea but in my mind it remained just that.

Somehow, it turned from an idea into a challenge. Being 18 years old, I am naturally invincible and unable to resist challenges. It is something that I will outgrow according to my mother. My uncle defies this motherly assurance by continuing to attempt slightly 'out there' adventures at the age of 42; afterwards he claims that he feels no soreness at all (that limp is an old foot injury).

We decided that the challenge was on and early one morning we were driving through Tidal River camping ground. It was raining and had rained for the whole of the two-hour drive to Wilsons Promontory. Not that a little rain was going to bother two people willing to undertake a challenge such as this one.

It was 9 am when we started out. We had to make good time to avoid a very late finish. Runners on and raincoats at the ready, we strode off up the road to Telegraph Saddle. This is a climb of about 300 metres and fresh as we were, it was a stroll. Aside from the irate truck driver who ran us off the road, and the persistent drizzle, it was quite pleasant.

From Telegraph Saddle you can see the slopes of Mts Oberon and Latrobe above the Tidal River valley. The mist was clearing and the rain eased; we found the track to Sealers Cove and followed it through bushland, bracken and gums which gave way to fern gullies. From Windy Saddle we began a strange, ambling run first perfected by a farmer from Colac in Victoria. Cliff Young, something of a hero to my uncle, won ultramarathons at this pace my uncle told me as we jogged along the track. 'He was an exceptionally fit man because he spent years chasing cows before he started running competitively.'

'Interesting training technique', I mused, wondering what my family would say if I added some cow chasing to my fitness sessions.

Our discussion continued through cooler rainforest; cows, muddy paddocks and the merits of training in gumboots carried us past bushwalkers on the boardwalks. Clear creeks ran under our feet and we ducked under large tree ferns. The shuffle ended eight kilometres later at Sealers Cove, the camp-

site for what is arguably the most popular overnight walk in the State. We passed many walkers on the way; a number of them planned to stay at this very pretty beach for the night.

'Who's got time for organised, structured challenges these days?' my uncle asked through a mouthful of Grandma's fruitcake as

we walked along the beach. 'It's better just to get an idea and go.' I agreed but I wished I had trained a bit more because the run and my old shoes had triggered strange shooting pains in my legs. I walked quietly for a while and the coastal scenery we could see as we climbed the bluff at the entrance to the cove cleared my mind very quickly. The sun was out and the sea was sparkling. Little islands were visible near the horizon as well as the coast of the northern Prom in a series of rocky coves that rise to bushy hills.

It was an impressive sight. But I was worried when the view inspired my uncle with another idea. It involved sea kayaks although I had to admit that exploring that coastline would make a fantastic expedition.

The weather remained sunny and warm as we passed struggling hikers on their way to Refuge Cove. This spot, more sheltered than Sealers Cove, harboured some luxury yachts that gave my uncle something else to dream about: 'we'll do the trip with yachts...'

After resting for lunch we climbed a large peak and descended to Little Waterloo Bay. That section was probably the hardest and the recurring stabs in my legs weren't helping. Our walk was delayed while my uncle administered some expert massage therapy to my legs. He stuck his elbow into pressure points on the tops of my legs while I lay on my stomach on a granite boulder, bellowing with pain. I should have been more suspicious of my uncle's 'expert' massage knowledge. He is an accountant after all. Surprisingly though, the elbow treatment worked and we were able to continue to Waterloo Bay. Although the weather had closed in on us again it was a wonderful sight.

At this point we said goodbye to the coast and set off cross-country, looking at the rocky peak of Mt Wilson and picking out fern gullies on its slopes as we walked. It was a gradual but arduous uphill climb until we met the Telegraph Track six kilometres further on. Conversation had shifted from the beauty of the Prom to the pains in our feet and legs as we stumbled on to the beach at Oberon

Bay. The sky was dark and the wind pushed us sideways as we walked on, contemplating a further eight kilometres to the car.

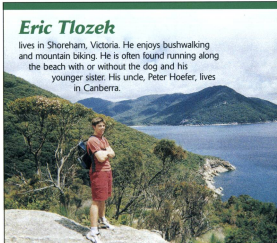
'C'mon Uncle, you're a walking machine', he grunted as we climbed up the Norman Bay track from the beach. I smiled but I was too tired to encourage myself in a similar manner. My feet and legs were numb and stiff—even the tiger snake on the side of the track failed to make us stop. We knew that our legs wouldn't get going again. Our last break had been at Little Waterloo Bay for water and it had been two-and-a-half hours since that interval. My legs had stopped screaming at me long ago and were simply aching and I felt light-headed.

As we rounded the cliffs and saw Norman Bay and Tidal River I expected to feel better but I soon discovered that the only thing that would make me feel better would be to stop walking. My uncle was now breaking into little runs and shouting motivational slogans.

Finally, watching him head up a small hill, shuffling painfully and singing, made something inside me snap. Suddenly my dead legs



Uncle, still looking fresh, near Sealers Cove.



Eric Tlozek

lives in Shoreham, Victoria. He enjoys bushwalking and mountain biking. He is often found running along the beach with or without the dog and his younger sister. His uncle, Peter Hoefler, lives in Canberra.

were stretching, running past him into the camping ground. It was a spectacular finish, especially when I almost fell over as I ran to the car. My stunned and somewhat chagrined uncle emerged 30 seconds later bemoaning his lack of sprinting power.

'Cheer up, Uncle', I said. 'It was a challenge, not a race.'

We had just completed one of the State's best three-day walks in one punishing, nine-hour session. We'd passed through four different landscapes, all of them spectacular, in a day walk on steroids. The tracks are well marked and maintained and the sights couldn't have been better. We were sore, chafed and happy. Notch up another challenge completed. Perhaps my uncle's ideas aren't so bad although I haven't started chasing cows just yet. ☺

Freycinet Fun

The gem of the Tasmanian granite belt, by *Peter Franklin*

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE FREYCINET PEN-insula was a bit disappointing. A friend suggested that we go for a walk there, so we travelled up from Hobart on a Friday night and camped by the car. As an 18-year-old about to embark on my first real overnight bushwalk, I was up at the crack of dawn pestering my companion to start walking. Breakfast for me was uncooked bacon and about two hours later I began to feel ill and our walk had to be abandoned.

A few years elapsed before I returned and on this occasion I was so taken with the stunning scenery that I was hooked and have come back at least once—and often twice—a year ever since.

This slice of Tasmania is blessed with a belt of granite and some of it rises hundreds of metres above surrounding country. It lines up with Wilsons Promontory in Victoria and stretches over the islands of Bass Strait into north-east Tasmania. Anyone familiar with Wilsons Promontory can probably see the similarities: the spectacular peaks, the great slabs of rock, the sweeping beaches and small coves.

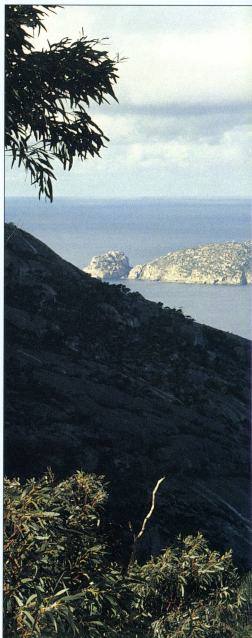
However, the Freycinet Peninsula is arguably more dramatic and scenic. It also has the advantage of being on the lee side of Tasmania and is splendid in autumn, winter

and spring. The Peninsula is just one part of Freycinet National Park—the northern section comprises Friendly Beaches and the surrounding hills with kilometres of beach backed by natural dunes. To the south is Schouten Island which has a rugged, cliff-lined granite eastern side. The western side is dolerite and is different in looks and vegetation.

The Freycinet Peninsula is the cornerstone; the first view of it is a sweeping bay backed by the Hazards, which rise straight from the bay. Further on are more granite peaks, the exquisitely beautiful Wineglass Bay, an isthmus with lagoons edged to the west by the golden sands of Hazards Beach. Coves lined with white beaches recede in the distance. The shapely Mt Freycinet overlooks all this splendour.

The landscape is not the only feature of the park to attract bushwalkers; it is also superb for wild flowers. Spring is the most bountiful but there seem to be flowers all year round as well as animals and birds in large numbers. Fortunately, problems caused by excessively tame possums seem to have abated in recent years since notices were put up asking people not to feed animals.

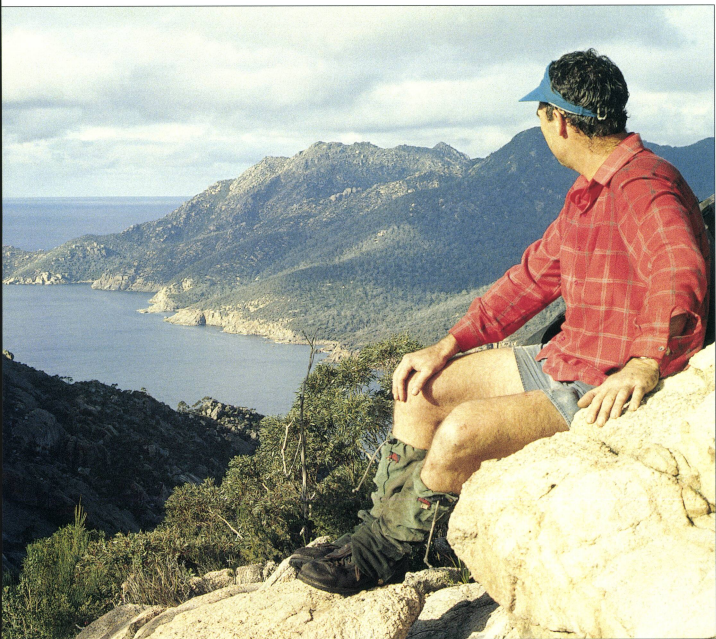
Tasmania is often thought of as a summer destination; even many locals think it is too cold to venture outdoors much in winter.



Below, the east coast of the Freycinet Peninsula from Gates Bluff.

All photos by Peter Franklin





Dave Tucker surveys the way ahead to Cape Forester and Mt Graham from the Hazards.

The west and southern coasts and highlands bear the brunt of the westerlies and the sheltered east coast is quite mild. It usually has only a fifth of the average winter rainfall for the State. The winds are tempered on the sheltered east coast. If you visit in the middle of the year you have to get into your tent very early, which is off-putting for many people but if you reach a camp-site early you can get used to it. By spring the extra daylight is quite pronounced.

In 1916 the Freycinet Peninsula was declared the first National Park in Tasmania, along with the delightful Mt Field. In those days places had to be very scenic to be eligible for National Park status. The area must have been a paradise away from the cold inland before white settlement and for the Aboriginal inhabitants who have left behind many mid-den sites, particularly behind beaches.

The French explorer Nicholas Baudin named the peninsula in 1802–03 after one

or both of the brothers Louis and Henri Freycinet, who were officers on the expedition. Within another 20 years sealing and whaling had taken their toll; the waters and

***'I was so taken
with the stunning
scenery that I
was hooked'***

sands of the bays became polluted and the whale population was wiped out. The waters and land have recovered but unfortunately the whales have not.

Pastoral and mining leases were taken in the area but the only legacies are the stone cottage at Cooks Beach and, on Schouten Island, remnant paddocks and rampant gorse. The weed is to be eliminated thanks to a joint venture between local rangers and volunteers.

Access

Freycinet National Park is in the middle of the Tasmanian east coast on a peninsula jutting into the Tasman Sea. A variety of roads can be used to get there from Hobart and Launceston, the most direct take about two-and-a-half hours. A bus service operates between Hobart and Launceston. It stops at Bicheno and a connecting service runs from there to Coles Bay, at the entrance to the park.

Tracks are all signposted, so navigation is a minor issue. Given the compactness of the park and its low altitude, even off-track walking is unlikely to present problems for the modestly experienced. Good maps are available.

Water, camp-sites and facilities

Finding fresh water can sometimes be a problem in this area of relatively low rainfall, particularly in summer and early autumn. During late winter and spring there is usually ample flow in the creeks. The most reliable sources are Lagunta and Jimmys, neither of which I have ever seen dry. Graham and Eastern Creeks are also quite reliable.

The three main camp-sites with toilets are all at the southern ends of beaches. Hazards Beach has the most dependable water; Cooks relies on tank water from an old cottage. The cottage is not exactly five star but some people still opt to stay in it. The creek at the Wineglass Bay camp-site is dependent on flow from lagoons and after a dry period its water is undrinkable. At Hazards Beach obtain water from up Lagunta Creek, not from the small lagoon beside the tent sites. Schouten Island has camp-sites, a creek and tank water. Bush camping is possible elsewhere in the park but you must have knowledge of previous rainfall and seasonal water conditions.

Overnight walks

Although the park is very popular for walking, the overwhelming majority of visitors confine themselves to a small area, so the more distant parts are often relatively quiet. In the cooler months you may have the camp-sites to yourself.

The main overnight walks revolve around a track on the western side of the Freycinet Peninsula. The track climbs a peak of 500 metres and winds back along the eastern side. It can be done as a circuit in either direction, or as a return trip if you don't mind walking the same ground twice. Two days are required for this medium-grade walk but it is best as a three-day walk. If you have time to spare you can add some off-track components which take four or more days.

After many years' walking in the area I have concluded that it is best to begin with the track on the western side and I have described the walk in that direction. Fortunately, there

is only one car park so the start and finish are at the same point; at the end of the road at the foot of the Hazards.

Shortly after leaving the car you reach a junction; take the track that continues to Hazards Beach. The left junction is to Wineglass Bay and this track can be used on the walk's final leg. You'll reach Hazards Beach after about one-and-a-half hours of gently

light. This sandy and comparatively flat track skirts Mt Freycinet; you won't be sweating uphill with your head down, so take the time to drink in the scenery. After an hour of bush you are suddenly confronted with the brilliant whiteness of Cooks Beach. Before you step on to the beach a sign indicates the track up to Mts Freycinet and Graham. This is used for the return leg. Cooks is pleasantly shaped

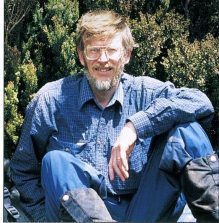


Above, toughing it out on Passage Beach. **Right,** black swans on Saltwater Lagoon, Friendly Beaches.



Peter Franklin

Of his late teens Peter was inspired by photos of the Tasmanian wilderness—it was the spark for a lifelong interest. He has bushwalked extensively in Tasmania and is particularly fond of the untracked alpine areas.



undulating terrain round the base of Mt Mayson. It is a predominantly sandy track, interspersed with a few easy rocky sections and overlooks the waters of Great Oyster Bay for most of the journey. You'll pass several creeks but they should not be relied upon as even the biggest one may be dry.

Hazards Beach is usually fairly solid to walk on. Nevertheless it is nice to get to the end of this three kilometre stretch of sand and arrive at the spacious Lagunta Creek camp-site. About a third of the way along the 45-minute section is a sign indicating the Isthmus Track to Wineglass Bay but there is no need to take this side-trip as you'll reach the bay on the last day of the walk. Camp at Lagunta Creek, or continue for another hour and 20 minutes to Cooks Beach camp-site.

For anyone with an interest in wild flowers the thryptomene and other shrubs from Hazards to Cooks Beaches will be a high-

light and it is only 20 minutes to the camp-site at the southern end—about the right length for beach walking!

It is very easy to laze about Cooks but nearby Bryans Beach is a shade under an hour away and beckons on the second day. At Bryans you will have great views of Schouten Island at the far side of the bay. Granite domes are at the back of the attractive Passage Beach. Walk to the lagoon at the end of Bryans Beach where there are little coves which are good for swimming. It is quite

difficult to get to Passage Beach as the shore line is rocky and you may have to scrub-bash. The effort is worth while if you have the energy as is the scramble to the domes of the Cape Değerando area.

On the final day find the track at the northern end of Cooks Beach for the ascent to Mt Graham. Initially it is easy walking over a sandy track through delightful heathland

The track now winds down to Wineglass Bay. The white beach curves to meet the peaks of the Hazards rising out of the bay. Walking time from the saddle to the bay is about two-and-half-hours. Although you'll be impressed by the stunning Wineglass Bay it is not easy to walk on the soft sand of the beach. After this 30-minute section, the heavily used track over a saddle in the Hazards takes about 45 minutes to the car park. Impressive stonework keeps this part of the track in good order and a lookout has been installed for a final view of the bay.

For anyone who doesn't mind off-track walking and is competent with navigation, this walk can be extended by spending time in the cliff-lined eastern part of the peninsula but be aware that water may be scarce.

Other walks

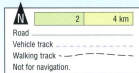
Freyncinet National Park has a lot of walks. If you're staying at Coles Bay, where you can camp just inside the park or in a range of accommodation, day walks are a major attraction. Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife lists the State's top day walks and Freyrcinet National Park has four of the 30 listed.

The very popular trip to Wineglass Bay with the option of returning by Hazards Beach takes about four or five hours. The three-hour return walk to Mt Amos, the most accessible of the Hazards, has excellent views over the park. It is best attempted in dry conditions. Walks along the top of the Hazards are an option but it is treacherous and steep in places and there are erosion problems. For strong walkers, a circuit over Mt Graham can be done when there are long daylight hours.

For those with a penchant for walking on pristine coastline, Friendly Beaches fits the bill. The dunes are in their natural state, free of marrum grass, and you can wander for several hours all the way to Freshwater Lagoon. Several hundred black swans congreg-



Freyrcinet Peninsula



During recent years commercial adventure-tour operators have realised the potential of the area. One company offers a four-day trip that includes Schouten Island and a walk from the south of Freyrcinet Peninsula to Blue-stone Bay and Friendly Beaches for a final night at a luxury lodge in the bush. Another company offers day walks with accommodation in cabins at Coles Bay.

Freyrcinet National Park may be the jewel but there are further opportunities for bush-walking and adventure tourism on the eastern seaboard of Tasmania. Not only has the district the potential to be a Mecca for outdoors activities, it could also be a pressure valve for Tasmania's very fragile World Heritage Area.

Apart from other National Parks, the presently unprotected Eastern Tiers is a huge, untapped area. This lovely eucalypt woodland has rugged gorges, clear streams and river valleys and is coveted by forestry interests at present. I am convinced that a variety of walks, perhaps including some serviced huts, could be viable.

Within the park the walking opportunities on the Freyrcinet Peninsula are well catered for but walks from Bicheno to Coles Bay by Friendly Beaches would have considerable appeal if the appropriate infrastructure were to be developed. Just on the other side of Bicheno, the Douglas-Apsley National Park could be linked with this beautiful area.



until you reach a creek and a small camp-site. From here the track climbs steeply to Jimmys Creek at East Freyrcinet Saddle, followed by a gentler climb to a saddle between Mts Freyrcinet and Graham. It takes an hour to reach East Freyrcinet and a further 45 minutes to the saddle between the peaks. It is well worth dropping your pack and making the short ascent to Mt Freyrcinet. Then it is a shortish but steep climb to Mt Graham and a scenic and fairly level walk along the crest before you reach Graham Creek.

ate at Saltwater Lagoon along with pelicans, ducks and other water birds. If you go especially gently and quietly the wallabies won't disappear and the swans will acknowledge your presence with their throaty calls. There aren't any signposts to the lagoon so be alert for the entrance. The smell of bird droppings may warn you.

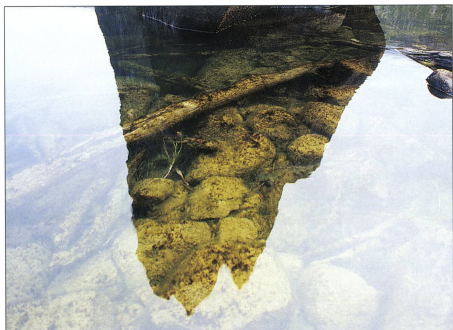
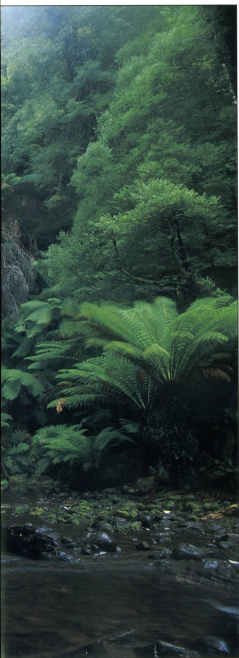
There isn't a ferry service to Schouten Island but fishing boats sometimes take visitors. A number of walks can be done but there isn't a track network

Tasmanian moods

A land of wild beauty, by Angus Munro



*The timeless and ethereal beauty of Russell Falls,
Mt Field National Park.*

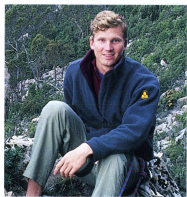


*A place for reflection; Lake Skinner,
Snowy Range, South-west Tasmania.*



*Viewed from Hartz Peak, Mt Wellington
floats on a hazy sea.*

Angus Munro, a born and bred Queenslander, has been sidetracked in Tasmania for some years. Driven into the wilderness by the lack of rugby telecasts in the Apple Isle, he indulges in bushwalking, climbing, diving, and occasional study.





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Cunninghams Gap to Mt

Spectacular ridge walking in south-east Queensland, by John Daly



Harold Charles surveys the eastern landscape from the ridge between Mt Castle and Hole-in-the-Wall. Both photos by John Daly

THIS WORLD HERITAGE LISTED AREA HAS an almost unbroken line of peaks, ridges and escarpments that extend north-south on the edge of the Scenic Rim. There aren't any recognised tracks leading to the escarpment from the east due to the steepness of the Ram-parts but a succession of ridges and valleys from the west provide access for walkers.

Vegetation along the range varies from open eucalypt forest on the exposed, drier slopes to thick, impenetrable rainforest. Moun-

tain heath vegetation flourishes on rocky ridges and prolific displays of rock orchids and giant spear lilies are along the cliff-edges in spring.

Tracks and routes lead to all the major features but many traverse rugged, inhospitable terrain and should only be attempted by fit, experienced walkers with good navigation skills. This two-day walk from Cunningham's Gap to Mt Castle is one of the Main Range National Park's classic walks.

When to go

Off-track walking in the Main Range is only recommended during the cooler months, usually from April to September. Winter nights are cool (cold by Queensland standards) and the days are usually warm and sunny. Walking is uncomfortable in summer due to high temperatures and there is little surface water so you'll have to carry enough for two days.

Castle



Further reading

Classic Wild Walks of Australia, by Robert Rankin; *Take A Walk in Queensland's National Parks, Southern Zone*, by John & Lyn Daly.

Permits

Bush camping permits are required. They cost \$3.85 a person a night. Contact the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service at Cunningham Gap for details. Phone (07) 4666 1133, fax (07) 4666 1297. The Main Range is a fuel-stove-only area. Check with QPWS regarding the availability of water before you start an off-track walk in the park.

Access

A car shuttle is necessary: drive west from Brisbane on the Cunningham Highway to Aratula. Turn right on to the Rosewood-Aratula road and travel 14.7 kilometres, then turn left through a double steel gate near the tree line. Drive a further two kilometres through four gates to a barbed-wire fence

The walk

Follow the Mt Cordeaux track uphill from the eastern end of the car park through lush rainforest. After about 45 minutes of steady climbing you'll pass a clump of spear lilies near the mouth of an abandoned goldmine. In the 1930s two brothers were duped with samples of 'fool's gold' and spent several years digging this shaft before they discovered that they had been hoaxed.

Five minutes from the mine a side track leads to Mt Cordeaux Lookout and its spectacular spear lilies. Return to the main track and head west along the southern face of Mt Cordeaux to an exposed, rocky ridge. Continue uphill through rainforest to another track junction. Head left through a tangle of moss-covered trees to Bare Rock where you can trace your route along the Ramparts to Mt Castle.

A well-defined track descends north from the end of Bare Rock to a saddle, then climbs past two clearings and fallen trees to the top of the next ridge. The rainforest canopy becomes much thicker as you descend through walking-stick palms towards a deep gully where loose rocks slow your progress. Descend steeply towards the bed of a creek, about two kilometres from Bare Rock. Although it isn't listed as an 'official' water source, there is usually a trickle of water in this creek even when Laidley Creek is dry.

Many people have become disoriented here—they head diagonally uphill to the north-west and open forest rather than staying close to the escarpment. After a long, steep climb you'll reach a camp-site on a knoll (GR 387022). The track then descends steeply through a tangle of liana vines to another saddle and the first of a series of ridge crests. After skirting left round a dish-shaped depression, head back towards the edge of the escarpment and continue steeply uphill until you reach a second camp-site (GR 396042). Look out for stinging trees as the track levels, then descends towards Sylvesters Lookout.

A more distinct rocky track descends to a gully before climbing steeply and becoming level. The track swings sharply left at a point where a huge liana vine hangs from the canopy. The track straight ahead ends at a rocky bluff with poor views.

Continue on the top of the ridge and look for an obvious (false) track leading left (downhill) into a gully. This track has been forged by a procession of geographically embarrassed bushwalkers. The correct track swings right, crossing an arched, fallen log. An obvious track now descends on the right side of the ridge through open eucalypt forest with thick, grassy ground cover and tall

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium-hard
Length	Two days
Distance	23 kilometres
Type	Scrambling with mountain scenery
Region	South-east Queensland
Nearest town	Aratula
Start/finish	Cunninghams Gap/Mt Castle foothills
Maps	Sunmap <i>Cunninghams Gap</i> 1:25 000; Sunmap <i>Townson</i> 1:25 000
Best time	April–September
Special points	Main Range is a fuel-stove-only area

Safety

Moss-covered boulders, precipitous cliffs and steep, grassy slopes must be traversed. Good scrambling skills are required for the rock slabs between Hole-in-the-Wall and Boars Head. Caution is required on the razor-back ridge from Boars Head to Mt Castle, especially when carrying a large pack. The final descent from Mt Castle is steep and a rope is extremely useful for lowering packs and possibly to belay the less confident. Naturally, the knowledge how to use it safely is essential.

at the park boundary. Four-wheel-drive vehicles can continue for two kilometres across three shallow creeks to a clearing (GR 425083). The northern buttress of Mt Castle is visible from this clearing. Leave one vehicle here, return to the highway and continue west for 19 kilometres to a car park at Cunningham Gap.

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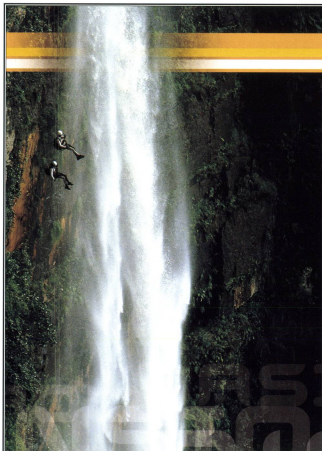
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grass-trees to the Laidley Creek Falls camp-site. A short track continues north from the camp-site to an exposed bluff where clumps of rock orchids line the cliff-face. There are great views into the Laidley valley and across to the imposing massif of Mt Castle.

Day two

The track from the camp-site descends west to Laidley Creek. When this creek is dry you may find water in shallow pools upstream. Sidle downhill along the edge of a grass-covered ridge before swinging sharply downhill (right). Ignore the track that continues to the base of the falls and turn right again towards the head of the falls.

Cross Laidley Falls and follow an obvious route along the base of the cliffline to Hole-in-the-Wall. This eroded hole in the cliff-face

can be spotted from the Cunningham Highway late in the afternoon when the sun has dipped below the horizon.

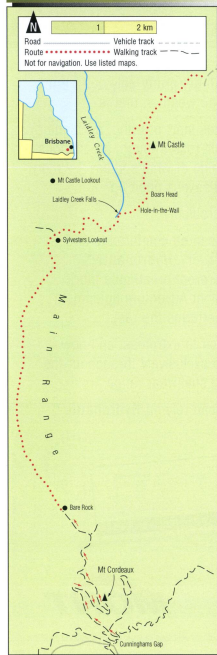
After exploring the hole scramble down a rock slab and walk along the north side of the cliff. A grass-covered ridge and a rocky razor-back lead to the summit of Boars Head. There are stunning views south along the Main Range Ramparts past Bare Rock and Mt Cordeaux to Mt Mitchell and Spicers Peak. Mt Superbus, southern Queensland's highest mountain, is on the horizon.

From Boars Head a very narrow ridge leads towards the buttress of Mt Castle. At

the north-eastern end of the mountain you will see the clearing where you left your vehicle. Walk about ten metres back from the knoll to find the descent route. A rope is a definite asset at this point. (See under 'Safety', above.) About 20 metres below the summit a ledge provides some respite before you descend the rest of the cliff. You may see the elusive brush-tailed rock wallaby around this point.

From the base of the cliffs head north-east along the edge of a steep, grassy slope to avoid a rainforest-choked gully on the left. Loose rock and scree slow your progress as

Cunninghams Gap to Mt Castle



Late afternoon light adds a bluish tinge to the trees as Ann Hill, left, and Lyn Daly enjoy an almost level section of the ridge; with just one more steep descent to go!

the end of this section the track skirts the eastern side of the ridge and traverses the head of an extremely steep, grassy slope to the top of the ridge. A short walk now leads to the cliffs below Mt Castle.

Contour the western edge of the buttress until the Mt Castle saddle becomes obvious, then swing east (uphill) to the saddle. A distinct track leads south (uphill) to a great lunch spot on the summit. It's worth exploring a track south from the summit to a rocky pinnacle with great views back along the eastern face of the mountain, especially when the rock orchids are in bloom.

After lunch walk north along the eastern edge of the plateau. When you reach a knoll

you work your way down (GR 418079).

Walk left (downhill) beside an old fence. About 20 metres before you reach the saddle climb through the fence and clamber straight down an extremely steep, grassy ridge to a gully choked with lantana. A series of animal tracks seem to lead through the lantana but the easiest route is to bash your way straight through the lantana for about 20 metres to a service road. Turn left and walk along the road to your vehicle. 🚗

John Daly and his wife Lyn have written five bushwalking guidebooks. They have turned their passion for conservation, bushwalking and travel into an occupation that allows them to spend months at a time working (walking) in the bush.

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Lerderderg Gorge

Remote walking on Melbourne's doorstep, by Greg Caire

RARELY IS IT POSSIBLE TO EXPERIENCE remote walking on the doorstep of a major Australian city. Yet less than an hour's drive from Melbourne's busy central business district, the 300 metre deep gorge of the Lerderderg River lies quietly awaiting walkers who are prepared to do a little wading and scrub-bashing. The most striking feature of this walk is the relative isolation—a wilderness experience in Melbourne's backyard. There are also many ruins and remnants of the area's gold-mining past, which add a little historical richness to the excursion. The gorge is in the boundaries of the Lerderderg State Park, a 14 250 hectare reserve between the Wombat State Forest to the north and the town of Bacchus Marsh to the south. The walking route passes along the banks and bed of the Lerderderg River and entails many wet crossings, some wading through deep pools, and regular encounters with very thick vegetation. As a result it is recommended for experienced walkers only. Three days are needed to complete the walk as described although it is possible to do it in two if river levels are very

low (usually in mid-summer or very early winter). Due to high flows in the wetter months (in winter and early spring) the trip may take four days and include some steep climbs out of the gorge and back in to avoid deep waterholes and a few swims. Whichever way

it can be very hot at this time of year and you need to keep an eye on the weather before you start out. Sudden electrical storms that dump rain in the Wombat State Forest and on surrounding plateaux can cause the river to rise rapidly to dangerous levels with-

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Hard
Length	Three days
Distance	35 kilometres
Type	Vegetated gorge and river, forest
Region	Central Victoria
Nearest town	Blackwood or Golden Point
Start/finish	Start at Golden Point, finish at Mackenzies Flat or Bacchus Marsh
Maps	Lerderderg and Werribee Gorges 1:35 000 Meridian Productions; Trentham, Greendale and Bullengarook 1:25 000 Vicmap sheets
Best time	Early June or January to March (low rainfall months)
Special points	Rising river levels after rain can make the gorge unsafe. Scrub along the river is very thick and it is best to walk downstream (in the direction bushes lie after the action of floodwater). Flowering blackwood wattle in spring is abundant and very beautiful.



Wet feet are a prospect in the Lerderderg Gorge. Both photos by Greg Caire

you look at it, this is a high-quality walk and you are unlikely to meet another person.

When to go

Travel along the gorge is generally quicker and easier in the summer months (December to February) as river levels are lower; however,

out warning. In early winter (June) river levels may be low but days are cooler for walking and nights are cold.

Safety

This is a difficult walk and should not be attempted by inexperienced parties. While

navigation is straightforward (as you spend most walking time within the confines of the gorge), sudden rises in river level may necessitate a hasty exit up steep-sided valleys, and the surrounding ridge systems are convoluted and difficult to navigate. This can make escape to higher ground confusing and careful navigation is required. Check weather forecasts before you leave. Also keep an eye out for brown- and tiger snakes when bush bashing, particularly in warmer weather. Areas containing ruins have deep mine shafts nearby, so be careful when exploring.

Maps and further reading

The *Lerderderg and Werribee Gorges* 1:35 000 Map Guide by Meridian Productions is the best general map, and covers the entire walk. Vicmap sheets *Trentham, Greendale* and *Bullengarook* at 1:25 000 are also useful. Suggested further reading includes: *60 Walks in Central Victoria's Gold Fields and Spa Country* by Tyrone Thomas, Hill of Content, 1995; *Weekend Walks Around Melbourne* by Glenn Tempest, Open Spaces Publishing, 2002.

Permits

At present permits are not required for walking in the Lerderderg State Park. Bush camping is permitted.

Access

Take the Western Freeway from Melbourne to the Greendale-Trentham road exit, which is on your left about 70 kilometres from the city. Turn right and continue to Blackwood, and again turn right on to the Golden Point road, following it to Golden Point and the start of the Byers Back Track (part of the walking route known as the Great Dividing Trail). Park here. A car shuttle or an arranged lift will be required to bring you from the end of the walk at Mackenzie Flat or Bacchus Marsh back to this point.

The walk

The 35 kilometre route descends almost the entire length of the gorge carved by the Lerderderg River. It is best to do the walk from north to south as described, following the river flow downstream and exiting at Mackenzie's Flat. This is because thick vegetation along the river valley has been pushed down in this direction by flood-water and is easier to negotiate from the north.

Continue down Byers Back Track from the end of the Golden Point road through dry eucalypt forest and along old water-races used during the gold-mining era to O'Brien's Crossing, about ten kilometres from the car park. Here is an official Parks Victoria camping ground (the only established and maintained camp-site in the park) and a toilet block. Cross the road and small causeway



Early morning deep in the gorge.

across the river to pick up the East Walk track (signposted), which heads downstream along the Lerderderg River. After some pleasant walking through blackwood wattle and manna-gums, you'll reach a large flat area surrounded by large piles of alluvial stones. This area, known loosely as 'Mine Camp', was formerly a large-scale gold-mining operation and makes a convenient camp-site for the first night. In the early morning and late evening it is common to hear the loud screeching of sulphur-crested and gang-gang cockatoos in this area.

Day two

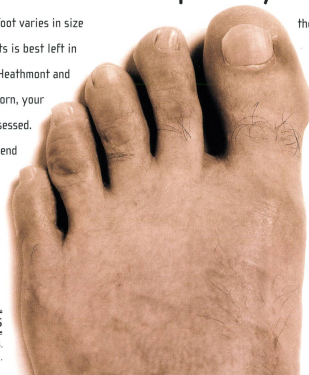
Rising early is recommended as today there is some of the most challenging walking of the trip. Continue along the East Walk track for about two kilometres, rising above river level and ascending a small ridge to an intersection with the Spanish Onion Track. From here, descend steeply south-east back to the Lerderderg River (some navigation is



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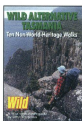
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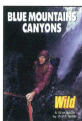
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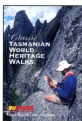
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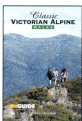
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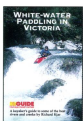
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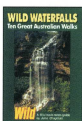
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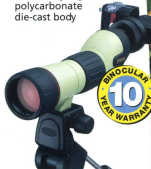
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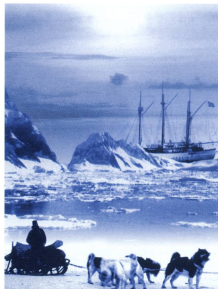
required) passing old mine shafts on the way. The formed track ends here and scrub-bashing begins. It's also possible to follow the river from directly behind the evening stop at Mine Camp to this point; however, some swimming and wading will be required and the bush at river level along this stretch is very thick.

Dense gorse and native species in the riverbed and on its banks will be the bane of your existence for the next two days. Gorse is a very spiky, introduced Scottish plant brought to Australia by miners and used to make hedges. You will learn to dislike it! Continue down the river, crossing where necessary and taking the paths of least resistance through the thick patches of scrub. The gorge is deep and the feeling of isolation is remarkable considering how close you are to Melbourne. Large blue gums and manna-gums line the river, and koalas, kangaroos, swamp wallabies and wombats are all common. You will also see the odd pack of feral goats—and the erosion caused by their passage on steep slopes. Take particular care with the weather for the next two days. The gorge is prone to rapid increases in the river level when rain falls in its catchment. You will also spend a lot of time walking on slippery, polished river stones, so be careful not to twist an ankle. Where you camp depends on your progress down the river. There aren't any recommended sites, so after about eight hours of battling gorse and wading through the river, choose a flat spot (quite a challenge!) as high above river level as possible, and camp. You will see several sites on both banks during the day.

Day three

Continue downstream, passing the occasional mine ruin, water race and alluvial gold washing area. Beyond the Ah Kow Ruin and Mine the gorse and thick bush thin out, making forward progress less of an ordeal; the gorge becomes wider and the many pools along the river's course are a little deeper. By early afternoon you will have reached the dam wall of the Lerderderg Weir. Cross it and descend the steps on its downstream side, continuing down-river past many sandy beaches. Water levels can be quite high here after significant rain and wading is unavoidable. There are some spectacular rocky buttresses in this area, more reminiscent of the red sandstone of the Gammon Ranges in South Australia than the foothills of the Great Dividing Range near Melbourne. Approximately four kilometres from Mackenzies Flat, there is a walking track on the north side of the river. Follow it to the picnic area and the finish of the walk. Pick up your lift here (Mackenzies Flat is in mobile phone range), or walk a further eight kilometres to Bacchus Marsh. 

Starting as a wide-eyed schoolboy in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, for two decades Greg Caie has been climbing, cross-country skiing and sea kayaking in various parts of the world. The happiness and warmth of poor, rural peoples around the globe are a constant source of inspiration to him.



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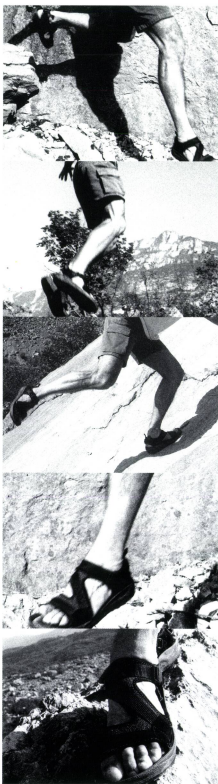
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Down sleeping-bags

Jim Graham plumps 'em up

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild's* editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor; the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

FOR A DOWN SLEEPING-BAG TO COMPLY with its job description it must trap enough warm air to insulate its occupant from the cold, external air. The bag should effect this basic function without causing the occupant to shiver or sweat excessively.

Just as a single pair of boots may be comfortable for one wearer and torture for another, a sleeping-bag should be matched to the dimensions and metabolic rate of the user as well as to the temperature and conditions in which it is to be used. It is the occupant who produces the heat, not the sleeping-bag.

I have attempted to short-list a range of sleeping-bags suitable for three-four season bushwalking and widely available in the specialist outdoors shops in major capital cities. The tiered prices within each brand surveyed are indicative of the quality of the fill, fabric, design and construction; these factors ultimately determine how well the bag will insulate the occupant from environmental extremes.

Seasons

Manufacturers and retailers use the four seasons as a consumer guide for matching sleeping-bags to climatic conditions. A drawback to this system is the variety of weather in a large country such as Australia. Spring is far cooler in southern Tasmania than in northern Queensland. Snowfall in summer is not unusual on the high plains in the south-eastern States. For most bushwalkers a suitable sleeping-bag would be one with at least a three-

season and preferably a four-season rating. Provided that a suitable shelter, sleeping-mat and inner sheet are used, such a bag should give its occupant sufficient insulation in most Australian conditions. Those who like to venture above the snowline and very cold sleepers may like to try a four-plus season rating.

Shape

Down sleeping-bags are available in two basic shapes. Tapered rectangular bags have room for the legs and feet to move around and will therefore allow a greater range of sleeping positions. The foot section can be partially or fully unzipped to vent the bag on warm nights. They can also be zipped together to form double bags or opened up completely as a large doona. Mummy bags are cut to hug the waist and legs and are more thermally efficient. Because there is less air inside the bag, less body heat is expended to keep the mummy bag warm. A mummy bag with the same seasonal rating as a tapered bag will generally be lighter and more compact. However, if you've never used one before it's wise to take a mummy bag for a test drive before you shell out.

Weight

The weights listed in this survey were provided by the manufacturers. A word of caution: if weight is a critical factor you may like to weigh each bag individually.







Not the kind of conditions likely to lure a man out of a decent sleeping-bag! Stephen Curtain



Down sleeping-bags

	Seasons	Shape	Fill	Fill weight, grams	Total weight, grams	Loft	Outer	Zip	Size	Design	Construction	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Aurora Australia www.aurorasleepingbags.com.au														
	3+	t	Duck/goose	800	1700	750	Ripstop nylon	T, S	Std	●●½	●●½	●●½		280
Alaska	3+	m	Duck/goose	800	1600	750	Ripstop nylon	T	Std	●●½	●●½	●●½		300
Domex New Zealand www.domex.co.nz														
	3+	t	Goose	700	1300	700	Nylon	S, S	Std	●●●	●●●	●●½		300
Pioneer	3+	t	Goose	700	1300	700	Pertex Endurance	S, S	Std	●●●½	●●●½	●●●		400
Bushlite	4	m	Goose	710	1500	700	Pertex Endurance	S	Std	●●●½	●●●½	●●●½		660
Fairlydown New Zealand www.fairlydown.co.nz														
	3	t	Duck	650	1500	650	Hydrolite	2 S	Std, XL	●●●●	●●½	●●●●		450
Cobra	4	t	Goose	700	1600	700	Dryloft	2 S	W, Std, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●		550
Scorpion	4	m	Goose	700	1350	700	Dryloft Lite	S	W, Std, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●		600
Kathmandu China/Vietnam www.kathmandu.com.au														
	3+	t	Goose	700	1500	550	Nylon taffeta	2 T	S, Std, XL	●●●	●●●	●●½	Built-in pillowcase in hood	460
Navigator	3+	t	Goose	700	1600	650	Dryheat	2 T	Std, XL	●●●	●●½	●●½	Built-in pillowcase in hood	660
Moonraker	4	m	Goose	760	1700	650	Dryheat	T	S, Std, XL	●●●	●●½	●●½	Rubberised patches on base to prevent slipping	730
Macpac New Zealand www.macpac.co.nz														
	3	t	Duck	700	1300	580	Pertex/Epic	2 T	Std, XL	●●●●	●●½	●●●	Women's version available (Azure)	500
Tempest	3	t	Duck	700	1500	580	Epic	2 T	Std, XL	●●●●	●●½	●●●		570
Solstice	4	m	Goose	700	1450	650	Epic	T	Std, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●		750
Marmot China/USA www.marmot.com														
	3	m	Goose	625	1304	600+	Pertex Horizon	T	Std, XL, XW	●●½	●●●	●●½	Dryloft shell available + \$150	550
Angel Fire	3	m	Goose	625	1193	600+	Pertex Horizon	T	W, XL	●●½	●●●	●●½		570
Helium	3	m	Goose	540	907	775+	Pertex Paraglight	S	Std, XL	●●●●	●●½	●●½	Lightest but most expensive bag surveyed	800
Mont Fiji/Australia www.mont.com.au														
	3	t	Duck	700	1390	600	Nylon taffeta	2 T	Std, XL	●●●	●●●	●●●		380
Brindabella	3+	t	Goose	700	1340	650	Nylon/Hydronaute XT	2 T	W, Std, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●½	Women's version available (Aurora)	470
Spindrift	4	m	Goose	750	1670	650+	Hydronaute XT	T	W, Std, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●½	Women's version available (Zeal) 780 grams	700
Mountain Designs Australia www.mountaindesigns.com.au														
	3+	t	Duck	800	1620	550	Polyester/Epic	2 T	Std	●●½	●●●	●●●		400
Adela	3+	t	Duck	800	1550	550	Epic	2 T	Std	●●●●	●●●●	●●●		550
Comice	4	m	Goose	700	1690	650	Epic	2 T	Std	●●●●	●●●●	●●●		790
Mountain Hardwear China www.mountainhardwear.com														
	3	m	Goose	650	1280	600	Nylon taffeta	T	Std	●●½	●●½	●●●	Has mosquito-net hood	420
Galaxy	4	m	Goose	694	1380	600	Conduit SL	T	Std	●●½	●●½	●●½	Expandable	600
Universe	4+	m	Goose	838	1650	600	Conduit SL	T	Std	●●½	●●½	●●½	Expandable	650

Down sleeping-bags continued

		Seasons	Shape	Fill	Fill weight, grams	Total weight, grams	Loft	Outer	Zips	Sizes	Design	Construction	Value	Comments	Average price, \$
One Planet Australia www.adventureone.com.au															
	Bungle	3	t	Duck	700	1500	600+	Ripstop nylon	2 T	Std, XLW	★★★★	★★	★★★★	Security pocket and pillowcase, stretch baffles	350
	Bushlite	3+	t	Goose	700	1500	700+	Epic	2 T	Std, XLW	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	As above	680
	Dandelion	4	m	Goose	750	1590	700+	Epic	T	Std	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	New design now has more knee- and shoulder room	650
Outer Limits China www.charlton.co.nz															
	Challenge f	3	t	Duck	600	1400	500	Polyester	2 T	Std	★★½	★★½	★★		210
	Columbia f	3+	t	Goose	750	1600	600	Polyester	2 T	Std	★★½	★★	★★		350
Paddy Pallin Australia www.paddypallin.com.au															
	Cloudmaker	3	t	Duck	750	1400	570	Pertex	2 T	Std, XL	★★★★	★★	★★		400
	Cloudmaker DL	3+	t	Duck	750	1420	570	Dryloft	2 T	Std	★★★★	★★½	★★½		500
	Freeling	4	m	Goose	700	1370	660	Dryloft	T	W, Std, XL	★★★★	★★★★	★★½	Women's version available (Townsend)	650
Roman Australia www.roman.com.au															
	Flight	3+	t	Duck	750	1500	550	Nylon taffeta	2 T	Std, XL, XW, XLW	★★½	★★	★★★★		320
	Everest Cap 2	4	t	Duck	880	1900	550	Pertex	2 T	Std, XL, XW, XLW	★★½	★★	★★★★		350
	Endurance	4	t	Goose	700	1600	600	Pertex Endurance	2 T	Std, XL, XW, XLW	★★½	★★½	★★★★		400
Sherpa Australia www.sherpa.com.au															
	Traveller	3	t	Duck/goose	600	1300	750	Ripstop nylon	2 T	Std, XL, XW, XLW	★★½	★★½	★★	Chest mull, passport pouch	280
	Alpine Dry	3+	t	Duck/goose	800	1700	750	Nylon/Emphatex	2 T	Std, XL, XW, XLW	★★	★★	★★½	Waterproof/breathable base and foot	450
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au															
	Vesper	3	t	Duck	700	1400	600	Nylon taffeta	2 T	Std	★★	★★	★★½		340
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Shape: t tapered rectangular, m mummy Type of zip slide: S single, T twin, Sizes: S short, Std standard, W women's version, XL extra long, XW extra wide, XLW extra wide and long f not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made															

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Shape:** t tapered rectangular, m mummy **Type of zip slide:** S single, T twin, XL extra long, XW extra wide, XLW extra wide and long **Sizes:** S short, Std standard, W women's version, f not seen by referee **The country** listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

I recently discovered that two down sleeping-bags I bought have different weights from those listed in the brochures—they weigh 1780 grams and 1641 grams, respectively, rather than the listed weights—1600 grams and 1450 grams. Discrepancies of up to 25 per cent have been noted in some products.

that live in cold climates is considered to be the best and, not surprisingly, it is the most expensive. The 'puffiness' of a down-filled bag that is laid out to loft provides a visual clue to the quality of the down.

Outer

Down is an extremely good insulator; its plumules trap body heat very effectively as long as it is dry. But here is the greatest limitation of down—if it gets wet its insulating properties are reduced. Leaking tents, condensation and liquid spills are all potential problems during a bushwalk. That isn't a reason to choose a synthetic fill! Rather, consider a sleeping-bag with a waterproof shell. For years Gore Dryloft was the premium fabric for down protection. Alternative fabrics such as Dryheat, Hydronaut XT,

Conduit SL and Epic now provide similar water-resistance at a lower cost. These fabrics are also windproof and retain body heat effectively but they don't breathe as well and are slightly heavier than Gore Dryloft.

Zips

The products in this survey have good-quality YKK zips. Most of the tapered bags are more versatile as they have two-way, full-length side- and foot zips.

Sizes

Some manufacturers make variations of their popular, down-filled bags to fit the dimensions of taller, shorter or broader individuals. I saw several women's models during the survey process.

Loft

Loft rating is an important but controversial subject. Manufacturers usually quote the minimum tested lofting capacity of the down used to fill their bags but this is not always the case. The greater the loft, the better the insulation it will provide at any given weight. Duck down tends to have a lower loft rating than goose down and duck down is generally only used in entry-level bags. Down from mature, free-range geese

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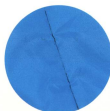
Super Reflecto

- Double layer
- Neck muff
- Weight 1500 gm
- Suitable for use to -8°C



Draw-cord

Plastic cord lock prevents rusting. Nylon spun Rayon cord.



Fine Stitching

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Hood

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7 Hole Microblend

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Neck Muff

Prevents heat loss around the shoulders (Super Reflecto only)



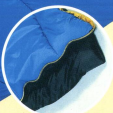
100% Nylon

210T70D extra-strong knit-lock weave.



Zip Tape

Runs along the zip to prevent it from snagging.



Draught Stop

Covers the zip to eliminate cold draughts and heat escaping.



Twin Zips

Two zips – one at base, the other along the side, to join two sleeping bags together, bottom zip for ventilation.



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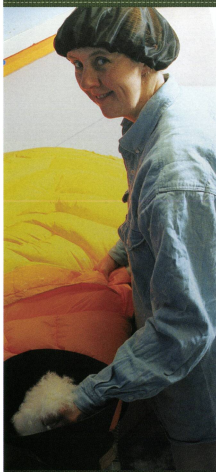
See details on page 21 in this issue.



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Design

This rating is a subjective assessment of how well the combined features of each product could be expected to provide comfort, protection and insulation when used inside a shelter (such as a tent). Points were awarded according to:

- The shape and placement of baffles and dividers
- The positioning of draught tubes and neck muffs
- The shape of the hood

Buy right

- Always try your sleeping bag before you buy. Check whether the zips snag easily or run freely. Check the fit, especially around your hips, shoulders and head, and check the length. Try whether the draw-cords are easy to use.
- For year-round bushwalking, tapered rectangular bags are highly recommended for their versatility and better ventilation.
- Cold sleepers should buy a bag with a higher season rating. If size and weight are an issue buy the best quality down possible, consider a mummy bag and use a compression sack.
- A down bag is an investment and should last at least ten years if you care for it properly. Don't skimp on quality or season ratings just to beat your budget. That breathable, waterproof fabric costing an extra \$100 may prove invaluable when conditions are wet or damp.

Construction

This rating is a subjective assessment of how well the features and materials are put together. Points were awarded according to:

- The quality of the materials used—zips, outer and inner fabrics, draw-cords
- The quality of the cut and stitching
- The quality of the down
- The overall size and weight of the bag in the stuff sack provided

High-quality down, breathable and waterproof fabrics, and compression sacks were rated higher.

Value

This rating, too, is subjective; it balances the design and construction of each product against its price.

Approximate price

The prices provided are for standard-sized models and were current for September 2002.

Jim Graham is a Melbourne-based physical/outdoor educator of 15 years' experience. He enjoys sharing his love of bushwalking, mountain-bike riding and white-water rafting with young people. His favourite outdoors classrooms are in the South Island of New Zealand.

This survey was refereed by Chris Bakke.

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Water filters and purifiers for bushwalking

Richard King filters the good from the bad

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild's* editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor; the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



You never know when you'll need a reliable water filter! (Esperance River, Tasmania.) Nick Hancock

STRAINING WATER THROUGH A CLOTH AND then picking the lumpy bits out of your teeth isn't the best way to avoid becoming ill from a drink. You need to filter out protozoa, bacteria and viruses (refer to box 'What is in the water?' and to the previous water filter and purifier surveys in *Wild* nos 54 and 77).

The units surveyed here are widely available in outdoors shops with the exception of the General Ecology products. The latter are new to the Australian market and are worth a look due to their suitability for outdoors use and their unique filtration method. The products are available in the Sydney central business district or from Happy Wanderers Caravan Accessories. For more information, contact the importer on (08) 8359 3000 or giuliani@purifiersaustralia.com.au

The products included in this survey are claimed to meet or exceed the US Environment Protection Authority standards. They will remove virtually all protozoa and bacteria from the water—and, in the case of purifiers, viruses as well—so the selection process will focus on other criteria.

Most viruses are too small to filter out easily. A purifier will either remove or deactivate virtually all viruses as the water is pumped through the unit. The same effect may be achieved by dosing filtered water before consumption with any number of proprietary solutions available from most outdoors shops; for example, iodine or chlorine. Virus protection is probably not required in Australia unless the supply is questionable—taking water directly down-

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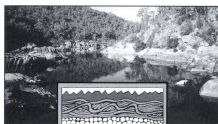
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stream from a septic system or sewerage treatment plant, for example.

What does all this mean for the user? Most of the world's freshwater sources are contaminated and this includes municipal town supplies (Sydney during the 1990s, for example). While all the models surveyed will stop most pathogens, they will allow some contaminants to pass. As alarming as it may sound, it is important to realise that humans, as a species, are adapted to most pathogens in our drinking-water. It is the concentration of pathogens that causes the problems; thus treated water is preferable as your body usually deals with small doses.

If all the units provide safe drinking-water, how do you differentiate between the products and what does the jargon mean?

The products surveyed strain the water through a material matrix. As a result the flow rate is determined by the following variables: the pressure differential between the input and output sides of the filter element, the total filter surface area exposed

What is in the water?

Protozoa

Protozoa are the largest of the water-borne pathogens (2 to 15 microns) and include *Giardia lamblia* (treatable with prescription drugs), *Cryptosporidium parvum* (seven to ten days' entertainment), and *Entamoeba histolytica* (symptoms last from one week to several months). The problem with protozoa is that in some cases the cysts that form the transmission phase of the pathogen are either resistant or immune to the chemical dosing of the infected water so, with the exception of pentavalent iodine, iodine or chlorine treatments won't stop infection.

Bacteria

Bacteria are the middle-sized group and include *Campylobacter*, *Escherichia coli* (E coli), *Salmonella* and *Shigella*. Bacteria are susceptible to both chemical treatment and filtration. You are more likely to suffer infection by bacteria due to poor hygiene in food preparation and handling, or failing to wash your hands before you put something in your mouth.






Viruses

Viruses are the smallest pathogen and the most difficult group to remove from the water. Generally they won't kill you but viruses can make life less than pleasant. The most common are rotavirus, various strains of hepatitis, meningitis and norwalk virus. Viruses are too small to be removed by mechanical sieving filtration, and either iodine or chlorine is added to the water to ensure their inactivation. The only brand surveyed to use a non-chemical means of purifying water is General Ecology.

to the water-pressure gradient and, finally, the size and number of pores in the filter matrix.

Glass-fibre filters use bundled strands of glass fibres. This type of filter provides good flow rates and is less susceptible to clogging due to the greater relative surface area for the same physical volume of the filter element as compared to a ceramic filter. Glass-

Water filters and purifiers for bushwalking

	Use	Weight	Unit type	Preferred number of users	Pore size, microns	Filter material	Approx rate of output, litres per minute	Cartridge capacity, litres	Cartridge replacement cost, \$	Durability	Portability	Performance	Maintenance	Value for money	Comments	Approx price, \$	
General Ecology USA www.purifiersaustralia.com.au																	
	MicroLite	CB, CT	200	M	1	1.0 A	Structured matrix	1.00	55	36	●●	●●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	Iodine tablets included	84
	First Need Deluxe	CB, CT, FB	430	P	3	0.4 A	As above	1.25	500	109	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	Removes viruses without the use of chemicals	235
	First Need Trav-L-Pure	CB, CT	625	P	3	0.4 A	As above	1.25	500	108	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	As above	356
Katadyn Switzerland www.katadyn.ch																	
	Mini	CB, CT	210	M	1	0.2	Ceramic	0.50	7000	152	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	Small unit which may be hard to clean and slow to use. Very compact and light design	233
	Combi	CB, CT	580	M	3	0.2	Ceramic/activated carbon	1.00	50 000 (activated carbon up to 200)	143	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Good general design, suitable for travelling and occasional bushwalking	323
	Pocket	FB, T	550	M	2-3	0.2	Ceramic	1.00	50 000	275	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	Simple, rugged and effective. It's also heavy. Ideal for serious use as you are unlikely to break it	499
MSR USA www.msrcorp.com																	
	MiniWorks	FB	456	M	2	0.3	Ceramic element, block-carbon core	1.00	400-800	90	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●● 1/2	Small and light	185
	WaterWorks II	FB	539	M	2	0.2	As above	1.00	na	98	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Easy to use and pump. May be a little delicate for abusive environments	349
PUR USA www.purwater.com																	
	Hiker	FB	312	M	2	0.3	Pleated glass-fibre, carbon core	1.00	160	67	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Just don't sit on it. Includes prefilter	162
	Guide	FB, T	397	M	4	0.3	As above	1.00	160	93	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	Simple and easy to use. Includes prefilter	202
SweetWater/Cascade Designs USA www.cascadedesigns.com																	
	WalkAbout	CB, CT	260	M	2	0.2 A	Glass-fibre filter. Has activated-carbon outer	0.90	380	77	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Accessories include an 80-micron prefilter	169
	Guardian	FB	320	M	4	0.2 A	As above	1.25	760	99	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	As above	199
	Guardian Purifier System	FB	390	P	4	0.2 A	As above	1.25	760	99	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	As above. Also comes with a chlorine solution	219
● Poor ●● Average ●●● Good ●●●● Excellent Use: CB casual bushwalking, CT casual travel, FB frequent bushwalking, T Trekking Unit type: M Microfilter, P Purifier Preferred number of users is determined by the unit's weight, performance, robustness and approximate rate of output Pore size: Absolute pore size refers to the largest particle that can find its way through the filter. Some models do not have a letter after the figure; in these cases, the surveyor has been unable to determine whether the filter pore size is absolute Cartridge capacity depends on the quality of water used and on whether the cartridge can be cleaned. The figures were supplied by the manufacturers Portability is a function of weight, size, durability, shape, intended use and the number of parts required na not available The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made																	

● Poor ●● Average ●●● Good ●●●● Excellent Use: CB casual bushwalking, CT casual travel, FB frequent bushwalking, T Trekking Unit type: M Microfilter, P Purifier Preferred number of users is determined by the unit's weight, performance, robustness and approximate rate of output Pore size: Absolute pore size refers to the largest particle that can find its way through the filter. Some models do not have a letter after the figure; in these cases, the surveyor has been unable to determine whether the filter pore size is absolute Cartridge capacity depends on the quality of water used and on whether the cartridge can be cleaned. The figures were supplied by the manufacturers Portability is a function of weight, size, durability, shape, intended use and the number of parts required na not available The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

fibres filters can be very difficult or impossible to clean when they finally clog. They also usually have a larger pore size than ceramic filters; for example, 0.3 micron.

Ceramic filters require a greater pressure differential (that is, they are harder to pump) for the same volume of water. The filter elements are more fragile. However, as most of the filtering is on the surface, they can be scraped clean many times.

Structured-matrix units use a combination of microfiltration, molecular sieving and

broad spectrum adsorption, and electro-kinetic attraction. The removal of particles, including viruses, is not directly dependent on absolute pore size—as is the case in the other models surveyed. An activated-carbon filter element has been added to some models to remove unpleasant tastes and some chemicals; however, the activated carbon will usually have a significantly shorter life span than the rest of the filter element.

In general, the quality of the filter unit's construction and the materials used will in-

fluence the weight and robustness of the unit. Weight is invariably linked to strength, all other things being equal. The arrangement of the water input and output systems will influence the user's liking for the unit. Some will prefer the output receptacle to be firmly attached to the filter pumping unit; others will like having a hose so that non-standard bottles may be filled.

In summary, do you require a microfilter or a purifier level of protection? Another important consideration is flow rate; for

Water in the Australian bush

Is it safe to drink? By Stuart Dobbie

MOST COUNTRIES, FROM THE POOREST 'developing' nations to the mighty, overdeveloped USA, have problems with water quality. What about here in Australia? I grew up with the concept of carrying a plastic cup on the outside of my pack, within easy reach to dip into whatever gently flowing creek happened to cross the track. In recent years my bushwalking friends have been returning from walks with stories of gut infections attributed to drinking impure water. Lake Tali Karg; Frenchmans Cap; the Snowy River. Are the precious waterways in Australian National Parks still safe?

What makes you sick

Impure water makes you sick when organisms in the water infect you. There are several different types:

- Viruses—subcellular genetic parasites that reproduce in the cells of a host;
- Bacteria—tiny cellular life forms;
- Protozoa—parasitic organisms such as giardia that infect the digestive system.

Symptoms of a bacterial or protozoan gut infection include stomach cramps, diarrhoea, fever and chills, nausea and vomiting. Depending on the type of infection, the symptoms may disappear after a few days or persist and require medical attention. During a walk the main concerns are dehydration and patient comfort. Evacuation may be required if problems are severe or persist for more than a few days. Viral infections which include nasties such as hepatitis A are more serious and the symptoms vary from one virus to another.

You may also become sick if other toxins are in the water. Waste from factories and houses, chemicals dumped from logging activity and run-off from roads are all potential contaminants. Even if the contaminant is not immediately harmful to humans, such as sediments from four-wheel-drive activity or soap and detergents from washing, the effect of changed conditions on aquatic life may compromise the quality of the water downstream.

When is the water likely to be bad?

I surveyed rangers from a few popular Australian National Parks. I asked what they thought were the major threats to water quality in their park. It appears that each park has specific problems but every park ranger considers bad camping practices are a concern.

In the Otway Ranges in south-west Victoria run-off from agriculture is a key problem as it raises the nutrient content in the

water and increases the prevalence of *E. Coli* bacteria.

In the Stirling Ranges in Western Australia water generally flows out of the park rather than into it so there is little concern about agricultural run-off. However, tap- and tank water are routinely checked for *E. Coli*. 'Most of the natural flowing sources of water in the Stirlings are considered reasonably good quality', says Stirling Ranges ranger Karlene

Treatment

If you suspect that your water is contaminated, there are several methods of sterilisation. The method you choose will depend on personal preference. The most common are:

- Boiling
- Chemical treatment
- Using a water filter

Method	Process	Good points	Bad points
Boiling	Boil for several minutes	Cheap and simple. Can be combined with cooking	Requires an energy source such as a wood fire (you may be in a popular area where fires are discouraged) or a stove with fuel heavy to carry)
Chemical treatment—chlorine	Add chlorine tablets to water and wait	Cheap. Weighs virtually nothing	Unpleasant taste. Chlorine may not kill some bugs
Chemical treatment—iodine	Add iodine tablets to water and wait 30 minutes	Cheap. Weighs virtually nothing	Some people find the taste unpleasant. Water treated this way cannot be used for cooking; it turns your pasta blue!
Filtration combined with chemical treatment	Pump water through a specially made device that passes water through an iodine-based filter	Good tasting, clear water	Very expensive. Kits may not last long before parts must be replaced. Does not work well with silted water. Yet another item to carry in the pack

Bain. 'Healthy mosses and frog activity are good indicators of the health of the water.'

Visitors to the Alpine National Park are advised to be careful near popular campsites, huts and toilets. Water should be collected upstream from these sites. Major streams, rivers and creeks that flow into the park from surrounding farmland and areas that are grazed by cattle or horses should be treated with caution. 'Water is generally good but we often advise visitors to boil water because it is found that people sometimes react badly to untreated water', advises ranger Gill Anderson. She cites faecal waste from humans, cattle and horses as the main pollutants as well as soap and detergents. Sources of contamination include: 'Pit toilets, inappropriate camping techniques, cattle grazing and areas heavily used by horse-riding parties, especially near rivers and streams used for horse washing, camping and drinking.'

A walking permit for the northern section of Wilsons Promontory National Park in Victoria includes a friendly warning about the water. At the Tin Mine Cove camp-site discarded toilet paper in the bushes above the creek reinforces the warning!

Development along the ridgelines in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales rules out the collection of water from the rivers and creeks below. Any watercourse where humans have access to the watershed may be contaminated.

If you have an ample energy source such as a stove, boiling is the most straightforward method. A few minutes at a steady boil are enough. At high altitudes you will need to increase this time to account for the lower boiling temperature.

Chlorine and iodine tablets are cheap and are available in most camping shops. Iodine solution can be bought from pharmacists; this may be the only source in developing countries. Iodine is the preferred chemical purifier as chlorine does not kill all germs. Tablets or measured drops are added to water, then you must wait 30 minutes before drinking it. Some people don't like the taste of water treated in this way; flavouring with powdered cordials or vitamin C tablets may be an option. You will need a stronger solution for very cold water.

In Europe and North America portable water filters are popular. Walkers may balk at yet another expensive 'gizmo' but a growing band of devotees swear by them. Water filters use pressure from a hand pump to pass the water through a micro-porous core. This removes impurities and the water has a clean, fresh taste. However, this system is only complete when combined with an iodine filter which will kill viruses; these are often sold as 'accessories'. Sometimes a carbon filter is used to remove the iodine after treatment.

The effects of long-term exposure to iodine are not known; neither iodine tablets nor

water filters are recommended for long-term use. None of these methods will reliably remove chemical toxins (or salt) from water.

How to avoid contributing to the problem

Germs such as giardia infect a host and are transferred to water in faecal waste. The water is ingested by another host and the cycle continues. Safe camping practices entail:

- Going to the toilet downhill from camp and well away from any watercourse or watershed.
- Digging a 15 centimetre hole and burying all your waste. Carry a lightweight plastic trowel and encourage your companions to use it too. In extremely sensitive areas consider a 'carry-in, carry-out' procedure. Rockclimbers on multi-day, big-wall ascents now carry 'poo-tubes'; multiday cave exploration expeditions have been carrying out their faecal waste for years. Support environmental causes that reduce inappropriate or uncontrolled development in or near wilderness areas.

Are Australia's wilderness areas safe?

After interviewing more than a dozen rangers from various bushwalking areas across Australia it was reassuring to hear that most of them—if cautiously—are of the opinion that you can drink untreated water if you take some precautions. Don't collect water too close to camping areas, development and the source of the water.

A major concern is the spread of bugs such as giardia, which are extremely prevalent overseas. Once they are present, the natural cycle from host to water and new host may systematically infect creeks and streams. Australian bushwalkers and globe-trotting backpackers will almost inevitably introduce such pests. In time it may become standard practice to treat all water before drinking, as is required in most other countries. However, by educating walkers we can delay the spread of these organisms. For the moment we can enjoy the unique privilege bestowed by Australia's wild places—the freedom to dip your cup into a clear, flowing stream and take a well-earned drink. ☐

Stuart Dobbie is a perpetual bumbly climber. A perfect day is one spent lost on some big, long-forgotten cliff miles from anywhere. He also enjoys long ski tours, sea kayaking trips and photography. He has a boring desk job which he avoids as much as he can.

example, Katadyn filters tend to be slightly harder and slower to pump due to the smaller pore size and easily cleaned ceramic filter elements. So, if field reliability is more important than easily producing a couple of litres, you may prefer a product with a ceramic filter element. On the other hand, if you will be out for only a few days and prefer a unit that's easier to pump, a product using a glass-fibre or structured-matrix filter element may be a better choice.

Tips for users

- Collect water from the cleanest available water source; check what is upstream for at least 50 metres, and take water from a running source rather than a stagnant pool. Avoid raw sewage and undiluted industrial discharges if possible.
- Prefilter the water by using either a proprietary prefilter such as SweetWater's 80 micron unit or your own prefilter made out of coffee filters and a rubber band—the fewer contaminants that have to be removed by the filter element, the longer the filter will last.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when storing the filter—it will prevent problems next time you try to use the unit.
- Prevent cross-contamination of the input and output sides; the best way to do this is to put the input hose in a separate, resealable storage bag.
- Replace the filter element when it reaches the end of its life. Manufacturers provide a means of determining this; for example, a ceramic gauge or food colouring. In all cases, a good indication is when the unit becomes more difficult to pump.
- In most cases, it is prudent to take a spare cartridge unless the filter element is new; even then, it may be worth the weight if the trip is for more than a few days.
- It is worth flushing iodised water through your filter after each trip to kill any bugs collected on the surface of the filter element. That way there is no dangerous build-up which could break through if anything goes wrong.

Other options

Water-bottle filters. Water-bottle filters are designed for light use such as day-trips close to a water source. Compared to the pump-style units surveyed, water-bottle filters are only suitable for one person, the filters are less effective as they have a larger pore size (one to two microns), and the filter cartridges generally have a shorter life span. Products on the market include the Bota of Boulder Outback filter, the Exstream Orinoco purifier and Mackenzie purifier, the Katadyn Bottle purifier and the Aquamira Water Bottle and Filter Kit. Prices range between \$55 and \$120.

Gravity filters. Gravity filters provide safe water for up to ten people in a fixed-base camp. The upside is that you do not have to pump; the downside is the low pro-

duction rate, such as five litres in the first hour. Katadyn's Camp (475 grams) and Siphon (440 grams) have a ceramic filter with a pore size of 0.2 micron. The Camp comprises a siphon filter and a ten litre water-bag. Fill the water-bag and suspend it from a tree. The Siphon makes use of height differentials, capillary pressure and water columns.

Pump-style filters for large groups. The pump-style models below are heavier than those surveyed but are suitable for up to 25 people in a base-camp environment; for example, rafting. The First Need Base Camp purifier (two kilograms), manufactured by General Ecology, has a structured-matrix filter with a pore size of 0.4 micron

Buy right

- Talk to shop staff. Some businesses run training courses for retail staff.
- Decide whether you want a microfilter or a purifier. If you are travelling overseas, find out whether you can buy safe, bottled water; it may be a better solution.
- Decide how many people will probably want to use the product on the same trip.
- Keep in mind the durability of the product. Will it survive being sat on?
- Consider the weight; a heavier model is usually more durable.
- If possible, practise pumping water through your preferred model before you buy it.
- Can the filter be cleaned? If not, the cartridge will be used up sooner than those that can be cleaned.
- Are filter cartridges readily available? In most parts of the world, spare parts are hard to find.
- Consider other places and ways to buy. Look on the Internet—you will be amazed how much information you can get.
- Are spares available? All the products surveyed seemed to have a good selection of spares readily available.

(absolute). The approximate rate of output is two litres a minute. The Katadyn Expedition (5.2 kilograms) has a ceramic filter with a pore size of 0.2 micron. The approximate rate of output is four litres a minute.

Chemical purification. Iodine and chlorine are the two most common chemicals used to purify water. However, individually they will not control some protozoa. They also have a tendency to leave an after-taste in the water. The dosing of water requires some attention to detail as the temperature of the water and the contact time are critical (follow the manufacturer's instructions). Look out for products such as Micropur Forte tablets, which contain silver and calcium hypochlorite (100 tablets for \$33), and Coghlan's Drinking Water Treatment, which uses iodine (one bottle for \$15, two-bottle set for \$20). ☐

Richard King lives surrounded by water—none of which he can drink—on a yacht on the east coast of Australia. When he's not sailing, he works as a consulting engineer and has had to use water filters as a normal part of life.

This survey was refereed by Roger Coffin.

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Cross your heart?

Since its introduction to the Australian market in 1993, the German brand **Tatonka** has been transformed from 'yet another brand of rucksacks' mainly specialising in day packs' to a major player with an innovative range that includes something for every kind of pack wearer. Tatonka's new range of **Motion** (three sizes) and **Glacier** (two sizes) packs, available this summer, continues this trend. The introduction of a new load-carrying system (called X-Lite), which has crossed metal rods that load the hip-belt, enables a heavier load to be carried in a smaller pack. The packs also demonstrate the results of considerable effort



Tatonka Motion 30 rucksack.

to reduce sweat under the pack. Distributed by **Outdoor Survival Australia**. Phone (03) 9775 1916. RRP's range from \$120 to \$145.

New kid in town

If you plan to introduce a new brand of **rainwear** to the Australian market you've got to be able to survive South-west Tassie, let alone the wilds of Sydney's Kent Street or Melbourne's Little Bourke Street. If you eschew the fabled Gore-Tex as New Zealand interloper **Oringi** has done, you're taking on an even greater challenge. However, this brash Kiwi company comes with watertight credentials from one of the world's wettest countries and a raft of testimonials



Oringi Grampian jacket.

to the effectiveness of its Flexothane stretchable and lightweight fabric. The samples we inspected (the **Grampian jacket** and

Buller overtrousers) were certainly light and supple and are said to be breathable as well (but less so than Gore-Tex). No glues or sealing tape are used—the sections are welded together. RRP \$259.95 and \$139.95, respectively. Phone Oringi's Australian office on 1800 674 640.

Something old, something new

Is it the great Aussie thong or is it a **sport sandal**? The **Source Equator** is both! At the front a familiar thong goes between your first two toes. At the back is the highly adjustable X-Cross strapping system. New in 2003, the Equator is distributed by **Outdoor Survival Australia**. Phone (03) 9775 1916. RRP \$115.

For decades the name **Meindl** has been a byword of quality at the heavy-duty end of the European **walking- and mountaineering-boot** market. Local distributor **Stäger Sport** (phone 1031 9529 2954) has had to work hard in the crowded and fiercely competitive local market. Stäger Sport has just introduced a range of lighter walking shoes, the nubuck leather and Cordura Magic series. The **Magic Men Low 3000** has an RRP of \$250.

Originally imported by the now defunct Patagonia Australia, **Montrail walking boots** are available again, this time from **Snowgum** shops. Snowgum has adopted

Watch this

A wristwatch-style **global positioning system**? Now *that's* news! **Casio's Pro Trek Satellite Navi** may be just the ticket for those who want to travel light but require the accuracy of a GPS. The unit includes a built-in, rechargeable lithium battery. Distributed by **Shriro Australia**. Phone (02) 9415 5000. RRP \$899.

Speaking of lightweight, **Black Diamond's Ion headtorch** weighs a mere 35 grams (including battery)! It has two LEDs and the claimed burn time is 15 hours. Previously available only in Paddy Pallin shops, the Black Diamond headtorch range is now available throughout Australia. Distributed

by **Sea to Summit**. Phone 1800 787 677. RRP \$59.95.

'Techno Junkies Dream—Whiz Bang WTC!' screams the press release for the

Suunto X6 Wristop Computer which, we are assured, will 'improve and monitor your performance—no kidding!' The X6 combines an altimeter and heart-rate monitor. Distributed by **Sheldon and Hammond**. Phone 1800 209 999. RRP \$699.



Left, Casio Pro Trek Satellite Navi GPS.

Right, Suunto X6 Wristop Computer.

Left, Black Diamond Ion headtorch.



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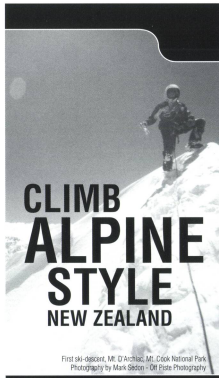


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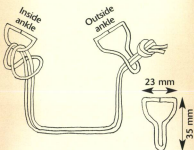
Montrail's exhaustive fitting system. It is claimed that this system was developed and new lasts introduced after 'scanning 800 000 pairs of feet to find out the true shape of the average person's feet'. The Montrail 'Clinical Catalogue' from Snowgum includes five models; top of the range is the **Torre GTX**.

trix

Better gaiter straps
Lashings of common sense from Martin Stone

Most gaiters have a strap or tie that passes under the instep of your boot to hold the gaiter snugly in place. The many designs almost invariably suffer from two problems:

The straps/ties quickly wear out and are difficult to replace in the field. The fasteners are difficult to operate when frozen or clogged with mud or dirt.



The solution:

Replace the buckle/D-ring on the outer ankle of each gaiter with a 'slotted D-ring' as shown. You can make these from three millimetre stainless steel or brass wire.

Replace each strap/tie with a simple loop of three millimetre nylon cord, knotted at one end as shown. Carry two spare loops in your repair kit.

To fasten, push the knot through the wide mouth of the D-ring, then let it slide down and jam in the slot. To unfasten, slide the knot up in the slot and let it pop back through the mouth of the D-ring.

I have been using my prototypes for many years in all sorts of cold and grotty conditions and the sheer simplicity of the system appears to be foolproof. They have never come undone by accident but they easily unfasten when required, even with frozen, fumbling fingers.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to Wild) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: wild@wild.com.au

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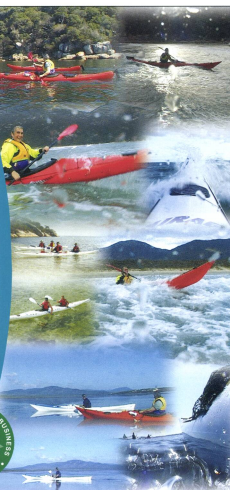
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Extending the South-west WHA

There has been considerable publicity about a series of karst caves east of Blakes Opening in the Huon valley (see *Wild* no 86) near Tasmania's South-west World Heritage Area; the caves were found by Forestry Tasmania during logging activity. Following the discovery of the caves two years ago, Forestry Tasmania stopped road building and suspended logging in the area.

The Forest Practices Board has suggested that a caver should accompany forestry workers on early visits to the area; however, the caver must agree not to report back to the caving community. Forestry Tasmania has said that it will not log the area surrounding the known caves but is at present surveying the dolomite and may possibly be considering rerouting the access road downhill, closer to the Huon River and the (in)famous Yo-Yo Track. The Wilderness Society, the Native Forest Network, Southern Tasmanian Cavers and the Greens have all called for an extension of the World Heritage Area to include the caves and for the access road to be rehabilitated. The Tasmanian Government seems unlikely to concede any further area to the WHA.

Stephen Bunton

▲ Act now

Write to Jim Bacon, Premier of Tasmania and Minister for National Parks & Tourism, and to Peg Putt, Greens Leader, both c/- Parliament House, Hobart, Tas 7000. Ask for an extension to the WHA and the creation of new National Parks where the conservation values of a particular area would be best served by long-term protection.

Friend or FoE?

Friends of the Earth UK estimates that since it launched its first report on the highly destructive Indonesian paper industry ('Paper Tiger, Hidden Dragons'), Indonesian pulp sales to the UK have dropped by 84 per cent and paper sales to the UK have dropped by 61 per cent. Trade data also show that this decline has cost the two paper companies identified (APP and APRIL) about £41.3 million (well over A\$100 million) in lost sales.

As a direct result of FoE's campaign APP has signed an agreement for an independent auditor to assess the quality of the remaining forest over which it has logging rights in Sumatra to protect the areas that are con-

Ozone closure



The hole in the ozone layer is said to be closing over, reported *The Australian* on 18 September. Research in the 1980s linked ozone depletion to chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) which were formerly used in some fridges, foam plastics and as a propellant in aerosol sprays. During the 1990s the use of CFCs was dras-

tically reduced due to the Montreal Protocol adopted in 1987.

Chief atmospheric research scientist at the CSIRO Paul Fraser said that CFCs in the atmosphere are declining at a rate of about one per cent a year and that in about 50 years the ozone layer is expected to have closed over completely.

sidered to have high conservation value. APRIL has halted logging in Tesso Nilo, the largest unprotected area of rainforest in Sumatra. Tesso Nilo is the refuge of Sumatran elephants. It is also the home of the most diverse plant life of any rainforest on earth.

Ed Matthew

Plantation overload

For the past seven years the Greens and the conservation movement have been pushing for an end to old-growth logging on the basis that sufficient plantations exist to provide saw-logs and wood-chips for Australia's needs, reported the *Potaroo Review* in its spring issue. A survey by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Rural Economics (ABARE) in August showed that there is a glut of timber due to the vast plantations established during the 1960s and 1970s.

Figures in the ABARE report suggest that by 2006 about 75 per cent of timber, rather than the forecast 62 per cent, will be taken from plantations. The report indicated that as the glut increases, timber prices will drop worldwide—Chile, Argentina, South Africa and New Zealand also have large potential supplies of plantation timber. Native-forest logging is set to undermine the market for plantation wood.

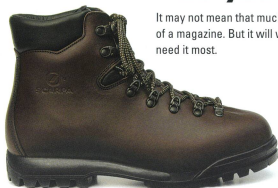
Wood-chips

- Four Greens were elected in recent Tasmanian State elections: Peg Putt, Nick McKim, Tim Morris and Kim Booth. The **18.2 per cent vote for the Greens in Tasmania** is a world record—and the trend is growing. As we went to press there was even more significant news for the Greens in the by-election for the **New South Wales Federal Government seat of Cunningham**. In a major upset, it was won by **Michael Organ**, giving the **Greens their first-ever member in the House of Representatives**. Bob Brown for PM!
- Japanese-owned **wood-chipper Dais-howa has failed in an attempt to claim \$17 000 compensation** for lost time and production caused by conservationists who prevented a wood-chip carrier from loading at the port of Eden, NSW. In a bid to protect Australia's tradition of peaceful protests, magistrate David Helpem decided not to make the order which had been sought by the prosecution.
- After the **Earth Summit** in Johannesburg in September, the Australian Conservation Foundation's Don Henry commented that 'world leaders have brought **global action on climate change** to the brink of reality despite a weak consensus Plan of Action which will not deliver sustainable development for the twenty-first century'.



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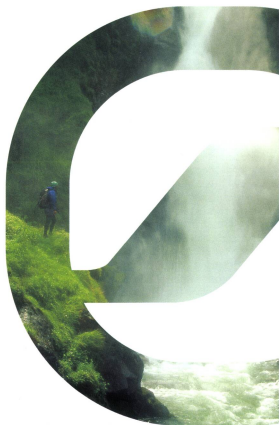
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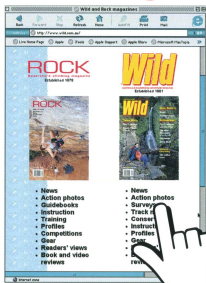
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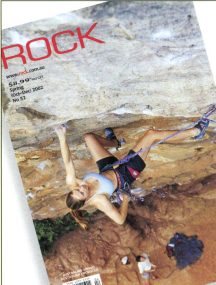
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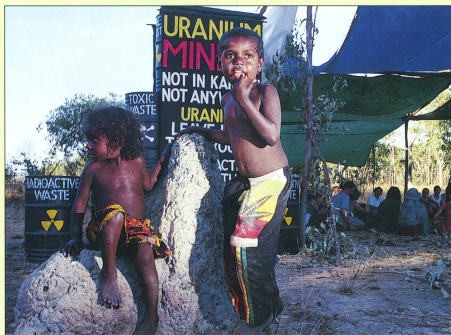
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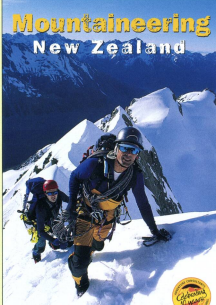
- **TWS** recently launched its latest corporate campaign—this time targeting Australian banks. Resolutions have been submitted to the ANZ, Commonwealth and the National Australia Bank (Westpac is to be contacted shortly). Every

Australia—Pilliga and Goonoo. The chance to protect Pilliga and Goonoo State Forests as National Parks represents a vital opportunity to preserve large areas of temperate woodland from ongoing degradation and damaging practices. **W**



Traditional landowners make known their views about uranium mining on their land, Jabiluka, Northern Territory. Sandy Scheltema

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shareholder of these banks (about two million people) will be asked to vote on whether it is appropriate for their bank to invest in companies that have a negative impact on Australia's old-growth forests.

- The ACF is calling on mining giant **Rio Tinto** to match its recent words with action and begin immediate **rehabilitation works at Jabiluka**. The call follows a commitment by the Chairman of Rio Tinto to plug the mine shaft at the controversial Jabiluka uranium mine in **Kakadu National Park**, Northern Territory.
- **New South Wales** is to be a State free of "dedicated" **native-forest-fed power stations**, reports the spring issue of the *Potoroo Review*. Is this a bid for the green vote? Is the word "dedicated" a neat escape route for the government when it decides to feed some old-growth-forest timber into the furnace? Find out the full story after the NSW State election in March 2003.

Further to the report in Green Pages, *Wild* no 84, a report released in October has confirmed that **logging Melbourne's water catchments** costs the city about 60 000 megalitres of fresh water a year according to the Age.

- It is estimated that **only eight per cent of Australia's temperate woodland remains**. The Brigalow Belt South bio-region in NSW contains two of the largest patches of temperate woodland left in



Forest in a Melbourne water catchment. Scheltema

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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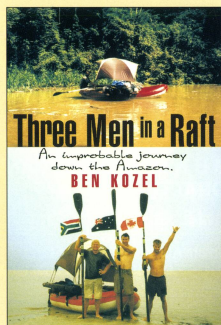
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Three Men in a Raft

by Ben Kozel (Pan Australia, 2002, RRP \$30).

Adventures don't come any bigger than this tale (originally told in *Wild* no 80) of a 7000 kilometre journey from the Pacific coast, crossing the continental divide, then rafting the entire length of the Amazon to the Atlantic. Of the trio—Adelaidean Ben Kozel, South African Scott Borthwick and Canadian Colin Angus—only the latter had any significant rafting know-how. Their naivete, their shoestring budget and patchy knowledge of the hazards charges this gripping story with authentic, wide-eyed excitement. The fact that they survived desperate white water, armed attack, assorted debilitating ailments and a gruelling 6000 kilometre row down the flatter stretches of the world's mightiest river is as much a testament to their remarkable group spirit as any individual resolve.

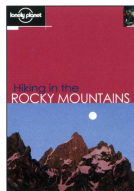
Quentin Chester



Hiking in the Rocky Mountains

by Clem Lindenmayer, Helen Fairbairn & Gareth McCormack (Lonely Planet, 2002, RRP \$33).

Hot on the heels of its 'best-of' guide to walking in North America, *Hiking in the USA*, Lonely Planet has released new titles which make an attempt to cover this vast



region in more detail. The first of these, *Hiking in the Rocky Mountains*, makes a valiant effort to cover comprehensively a range that stretches from the Canadian border to Mexico. With strong emphasis on hikes that take two to four days and numerous day walks, the book follows Lonely Planet's now well-established format and includes excellent maps, some appetite-whetting colour photographs and a wealth of essential information.

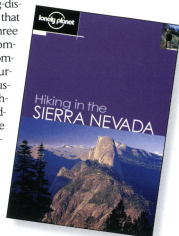
Greg Caire

Hiking in the Sierra Nevada

by John Mock & Kimberley O'Neill (Lonely Planet, 2002, \$30.80).

Lonely Planet's latest USA guide, *Hiking in the Sierra Nevada*, continues the company's coverage of North American walking. Like previous titles in the series, the amount of information crammed into this small volume is impressive and, more surprisingly, very easily accessible (through several clear indexes). The standard of mapping remains very high and the selection of walks is more varied than in other titles. The guide provides descriptions of short walks as well as several long-distance tracks that take up to three weeks to complete. A recommended purchase for Australian bushwalkers heading into the Sierra Nevada. ☺

GC



Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them with a digital image of the cover for reproduction and RRP to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



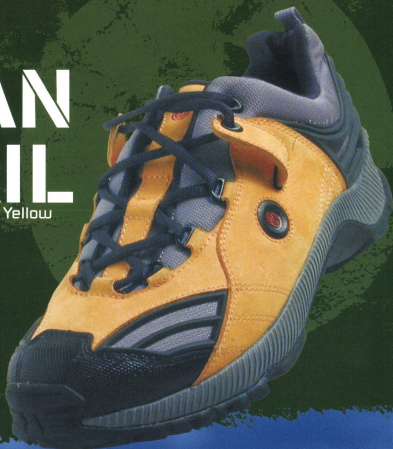
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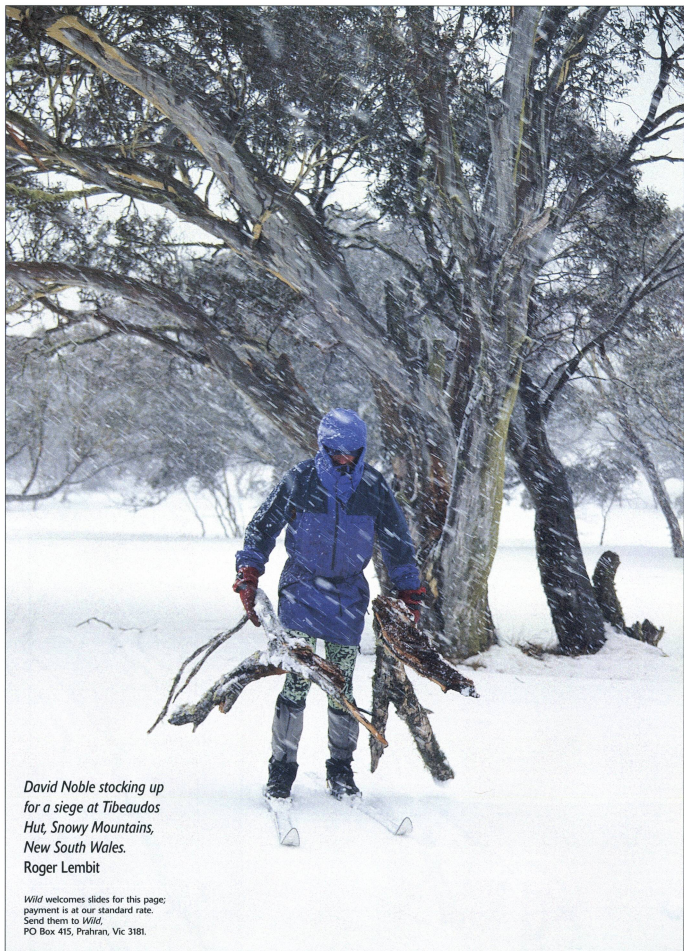
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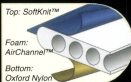
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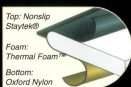
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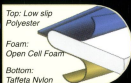


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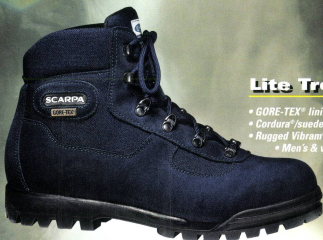
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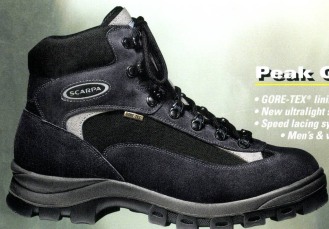
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